



## Human Attitudes that Prevent the Advance of Human Progress and Civilization

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### Abstract

*Human civilization is a long record of the evolution of human thought. Rationality enables civilizations to progress. Since the time of Socrates, human advancement has relied heavily on the power of logic and reason. Logic involves study while reason involves implementation. Converting reason into action would require not so much new creativity but a greater strength. If reason is implemented with the required clarity, it has the power to save the world from imminent danger. It has the ability to function in a way that secures the greatest truth in a given set of circumstances. Implementing Reason requires that man does not repeat his past errors. The world has not yet outgrown the uses of Reason. The most rational course of action would be to address human issues and to take care of human interests. Conflicts can be avoided by resorting to a values-based approach.*

Man is the crown of terrestrial life and exhibits reason as the crown of his accomplishment. Reason and logic are the finest tools of his mind. While senses involve observation, reason involves thinking. Human civilization is thus a long record of the evolution of human thought. When we speak of improving comforts we mean those comforts that issue out of technology. But what we call technology is only the material expression of a thought. It is not as if every thought is capable of technological conversion. Only those thoughts that exhibit reasoning are capable of such a conversion.

As such, rationality is what enables civilizations to progress. Sri Aurobindo says that Socrates and Newton are the two greatest thinkers the world has seen. So, what is thinking? Thinking involves connecting two different thoughts. Creative thoughts connect seemingly contradictory thoughts. It is thoughts such as these that made river-bed settlements in ancient times possible. Further creative thoughts laid down the rules of village life. The thinking of Newton and Socrates represents one of the highest levels of thinking.

An apple falling is a very common sight that does not raise any question in the common man's mind. Either the common man thinks about using the apple at home for eating or selling it at the market for a price. One is domestic consumption while the other is for commercial benefit. But Newton tried to connect the falling of apple with Nature's functioning, which led to the discovery of the law of gravitation. There is no higher physical field of enquiry and therefore his thought was placed at the summit. The fact that Socrates is remembered

even today is mainly because his mind dwelt on higher themes of knowledge. He observed the behavior of people, especially youth. He could see the difference between the highest knowledge and the simplest of thinking. That led to the birth of logic which remains the greatest tool of mind to this day.

Since the time of Socrates, human advancement has relied heavily on the power of logic along with the power of reason. The difference between them is a difference in theory and implementation. While logic is a systematic study, reason is the application of logic. Accomplishment in life today stands as the result of logic and reason. It will not be farfetched to say that civilization is the result of rationality. All products that we use in civilized life come only out of rational thoughts. All great institutions of civilized life such as agriculture, trade, urban life, education, government and transport are all products of civilized life. Supposing they are not effective, they will all quickly disappear. Because of the dynamism behind the application of reason, it soon spreads all over the world. Over the centuries, humanity has acquired the capacity for Reason which it uses as its prime tool to seek knowledge. Even then, it is beset with problems some of which look to be intractable. Some are so problematic that they seem to generate additional problems of their own. This only shows that knowledge has exhausted its capacity and is acting in the reverse now. Though this is not new, it is still worth some consideration as it appears to be very complicated.

When FAO predicted a serious famine in India, the country woke up in time and turned a serious problem into a great accomplishment called the Green Revolution. Post the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the world situation was conducive to the abolition of all wars, but that could not be implemented due to the irreconcilable differences between superpowers. The power of Veto that allows for cancellation of decisions paved the way for the formation of U.N. From the point of view of the big Five, it was eminently rational to introduce the power of Veto and thereby pave the way for the formation of the U.N. Solving such major problems requires that we make rational decisions.

Physical labor is accomplished using the strength of muscles. When mind starts thinking, its powers of Reason and Logic are commissioned. These are powers that await our call. They have rarely failed man so far. This is verifiable from recorded history, recent as well as long ago. Such instances are innumerable. Corporate history also endorses this view. Chrysler Corporation set a record though of a bad sort. It created the largest debt burden in all of corporate history. Economists all over the U.S took the stand that Chrysler had no option but to close down. They were right when they looked at Chrysler from a conventional point of view. Lee Iacocca took charge on an annual salary of one million dollars. But after assuming charge, he very much regretted his decision. He took charge of a company that spent 50 million dollars a day but only had 10 million in the bank. 39 out of 40 VPs were lacking discipline and hard work. While he went on a tour of the company's facilities, workers made fun of him as they engaged in playing cards and indulged in drinking sessions. Debt peaked at the level of 1700 million dollars. He felt like running away but did not choose to do so as he had made a commitment. Awed by the enormity of the challenge, his vision became blurred and his diabetes shot up way beyond normal. Against all odds he turned Chrysler upside down to the amazement of everybody around. Aligned against him were banks, the press,

public and those with a very fertile imagination. It is doubtful if anybody else in his position would have even known what to do. But, like a General tasked with the job of inspiring a retreating army, he set about his work with visionary enthusiasm.

There have been Generals who have managed to inspire a retreating army to fight a numerically superior army and even win the battle. Such leadership by able Generals has generally won battles as evident in the lives of Henry V, Napoleon, Churchill and many other lesser-known individuals. Inspiration transforms failure into victory. While Napoleon won victories promising loot, Henry V allured his soldiers promising eternal fame. As for Churchill, he inspired his soldiers with an offer of blood, sweat and tears.

A question arises as to whether Iacocca could have functioned like Churchill. It was possible for him to make key decisions but the question arises as to who would have been able to implement all of them. He was strong enough to dismiss 34 VPs in his office. He also dismissed a few thousand excess labor force. As part of his decision-making, he resolved to design a small fuel-efficient car. Furthermore, he appeared personally on TV assuring customers that they could return their Chrysler car if they did not find its performance satisfactory. Reforming refractory labor requires the strength of a giant. In that sense he was really a giant of a man. What lay behind that miracle? All he used was only the power of reason. With the looming petro crisis it only makes sense to give up cars that consume a lot of petrol and opt for fuel-efficient cars. How was it possible for a company that was on loan default to persuade 400 banks to lend more loans? He asked the American government for a 10-year loan guarantee. He was asked by the government to speak to the Congress. Many years before joining Chrysler, he had taken a course on public speaking and now he put that forgotten skill to use. The talk he gave to the Congress made it respond.

Failure is often followed by victory. However, we see practically that failure is never followed by success but by total vanishing of the institution. All ancient civilizations that declined simply vanished from the scene. The British Empire too vanished like that. However, if such a fallen person does recover, he or she will definitely survive and rise higher. This is because the energy needed to reverse a failure generates a momentum that propels man to greater heights. This is normally at a greater speed than normal acceleration. The man who recovers from failure will be a bigger success than one who has never failed. In a record 3 years, Iacocca cleared all the loans, gathered an equal amount of savings and released the American government from its loan guarantees.

It requires profound insight to understand that Iacocca never used any miraculous powers to obtain the results that he got. The only thing that he did was to employ the power of rationality to his advantage. In panic situations mind normally does not think at all as the panic forces the mind to stop thinking. In such situations mind uses panic to justify its inaction. Though reason is a powerful tool, there are plenty of other agents in life that can command it to serve them. Such an arrangement can serve up to the penultimate stage which is what the Pakistani leader Jinnah found. At the time of the partition of India, Jinnah took the stand that the whole of Bengal and the Punjab must come to Pakistan. He further argued that a Muslim in Bengal is first a Bengali and then a Muslim. He found that Mountbatten agreed

with him on this point. Only later on he found Mountbatten turning around and questioning him saying that an Indian Muslim is an Indian first and a Muslim second and therefore India should not be divided.

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Though there are many politicians who can find all the correct reasoning for saving the earth from certain annihilation, the man with the proper willpower and capacity for execution is missing. After the post-war demise of war leaders, the world has not witnessed the emergence of leaders of equal stature or of world-governing policies. Even if world leaders have not emerged, ideas and organizations can take their place. When one talks about application of ideas at the international level, it often degenerates from its complex level and assumes very simple forms. Converting reason into action requires not so much new creativity but greater strength.

Critical situations are like public appearances. When a leader faces an audience, suddenly the clarity of his thinking disappears and the sequence of thoughts in his mind vanishes. It is precisely for this reason that great orators who win applause for their inspiring oration find their speeches bereft of clarity. The inspiration comes from unorganized ideas that acquire an emotional garb. Considering all this, it is fair to say that if reason is implemented with the required clarity, it has the power to save the world from imminent danger. However, it needs to be emphasized that for such a result to come about, it should be shorn of hypocritical diplomacy and implemented with Truth in all its purity.

Reason has the ability to function in a way that secures the greatest truth in a given set of circumstances. Compromises and experiences are not fully rational. Compromises take the line of least resistance and as such are not fully rational. Reason and logic aim at the widest possible truth in a given set of circumstances. Anand in Gujarat, India, is the site of a dairy cooperative society. In the '60s and '70s it was a losing concern, highly disorganized and witnessing only losses. Though the administration was active, it was not constructively dynamic. When organization lacks a proper structure, dynamism aggravates the existing disorganization. As such the whole motive was to simply maintain the organization and not to seek any higher profits. But Verghese Kurien created history by making India self-sufficient and one of the world's largest milk producers.

Had famine set in India in the 1970s there would have been no way to escape it and it would have brought a major tragedy. Fortunately, it was averted. It demonstrated the power of simple reason to bring about complex results. The last famine India suffered was in 1943 which was largely the result of the government's incompetency than any real shortage of resources. But the incompetency resulted in the loss of 3 million lives. But those were days when loss of lives was taken for granted. Disasters such as war, famine, floods, and epidemics were seen as divine agencies for offsetting population growth. For instance, the Black Plague alone killed one third of Europe's population. In those days such fatalities were accepted

as God's Will and people resigned themselves to their fate. But the very fact that humanity thinks of remedial measures these days shows a good civilizing attitude. Fortunately, society found a vaccine for plague and the scourge vanished from earth. Humanity also took up ending famine as a goal. The UN lent its support as well. Accordingly, it prepared a warning and asked for timely countermeasures. The world has not yet outgrown the uses of Reason. The Government of India did its best. There were but very meager results. The powers of Reason were not used properly. Reason, if employed, yields comprehensive truth which in turn will generate very beneficial results. Reason can also lend its support subconsciously if it is not directly employed. The famine was averted by moving surplus food from affluent areas to other areas known for scarcity. Thus was born the "Green Revolution," named by an official in the American agricultural department.

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Apart from being a success in India, the food production effort spread beyond India and became global in its impact. Even if we study the project now, we cannot find anything there that could be described as something marvelous. They were all only acts of common sense. Hybrid seeds developed during that decade were imported for the benefit of Indian farmers. Preparations were made for local production of these hybrid seeds so that they did not have to be imported every time from abroad. Further encouragement was given to promote research in the area of hybrid development. All such efforts show that attempts were made to maximize the available opportunity. In that direction, farm scientists were given compensation commensurate with that of other scientists. A quasi-governmental body known as Food Corporation of India was set up to deal with problems of food production and freed from the constraints that normally went with the bureaucracy inherited from the British days. Similar corporations for seeds and fertilizers were also set up to expedite these matters. Most importantly, a floor price was guaranteed to farmers to prevent the falling of prices that normally accompanies surplus production. Actually the minister who headed the department of agriculture left that department for another in just 30 months. But in an overall sense, he fundamentally reorganized the functions of the agricultural department creating virtually new organizations. These organizations were preeminently rational. In return for such a rational effort, the Indian farmers responded, which led to magnificent results.

Thus, when Reason is properly commissioned, it goes to the roots of an issue and brings out the truth hidden there. The whole world is immersed in technology and is proud of it too. Instead it should focus more on releasing collective individuality which can correct the imbalances in the environment. Reason also demands the very same thing. There is a saying popular in U.N circles: "Correct the Man, the System will correct itself". Going by this saying, the most rational course of action would be to address human issues and to take care of human interests.

Stupidity is the inability to use common sense. An idiot fits these descriptions. One poet refers to the idiot hour that destroys centuries of work. Though man exhibits powers of reason and logic, he is also capable of stupidity. In Sri Aurobindo's point of view, man holds the key to evolution. His distinguishing capacity is that he can exceed himself. Though endowed

with knowledge and ignorance, he can choose between them. Unfortunately, he mostly prefers to make the wrong choice. Once a habit sets in, it has the tendency to safeguard its self-preservation.

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*“If only man chooses to solve the problems he has, he sees plenty of scope for converting them into opportunities.”*

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The theme of this article is that if only man chooses to solve the problems he has, he sees plenty of scope for converting them into opportunities. Man has the capacity to go to first principles to solve problems. What Chrysler and the Green Revolution achieved are miracles enough. Still if the examples are not satisfactory, one can look at what FDR, Churchill and Gandhi have achieved. Currently there is a scarcity of leaders and one finds that the world has moved from individual leadership to collective leadership of ideas. Moreover, these ideas need not be invented as great leaders did before. They are there for all to see.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the hold of religion on people’s minds was great, greater than that of the rulers. Religion unified Europe far better than politics did. In those days, superstition was rife. Martin Luther rose in protest over this. Printing came to his aid to spread his message widely among the population. Science came on the scene with the sole aim of fighting superstition, a battle it is still trying to win. Incidentally, its fervor went too far and persisted for too long, leading to energizing the adversary. As a result of all this, Science itself became superstitious. The current world stands victim to this superstitious attitude of science.

The individual mind that was born in Greece became superstitious when it turned collective. Shakespeare, in writing Hamlet, signified the birth of mind in the individual. It is unfortunate that this notable fact has escaped the attention of scholars for the last 400 years. Karl Marx has commented that Capitalism carries the seeds of its own destruction. It was born as a product of commerce which is pursued for the sake of gaining profit, a big incentive for the human ego. Actually it thrives not so much on one’s own private investment but on public funding. Public investment proves to be a function of continuous higher public expectation. The volatile jump in price of shares and stocks clearly proves it to be a house of cards.

We see that crashes normally follow a boom at which point an ascending curve completes itself. The world saw its emergence first in 1929, but a minor version of it showed itself 100 years earlier. At that time there was no known mental support with which one could have counteracted the recession. The then American President who did not know what to do simply witnessed the recession and left office. It becomes necessary for us to know what reason chooses to tell us at such moments. Reason makes its appearance on the scene when the existing facts are coordinated. When there are no facts on the horizon, we need to go to the first principles. When FDR became President, he was determined to find a solution to the economic crisis. That was at a time when six thousand banks had simply failed. Every other bank that was running had queues of depositors waiting to recover the money they had

deposited. FDR then closed the banks for a week and started talking on the radio with the American public asking them to reconsider the withdrawal of deposits from the banks. He told them what was lost was only money in dollars. Thus, the public's trust and confidence in America's ability to earn money were renewed.

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The settlers had survived all the great hardships that they faced as a result of which they had built up strong self-confidence and self-esteem, which holds true to this day. Currently Americans have invested their trust in their dollar savings which has disappeared. However, what has disappeared is only money, a symbolic entity. It is a symbol of one man trusting another's integrity. Herein lies a complex web of trust. When money is born out of trust, it is only reasonable to assume that money would disappear when trust dissolves.

What was FDR supposed to offer the American citizens that would instill trust in them? He questioned the citizens as to who earned all the money and wealth the country had accumulated. Then he raised a further question as to where all that money came from. It all came from the fields and factories. He further argued that the fields and factories were still there, they had not disappeared. If they had not disappeared, then what could have gone wrong? He claimed that if something had gone wrong, the government had the power to set it right. That rang a bell in the minds of American citizens. He assured them that their deposits above 10,000 dollars would all be insured. This caused a transformation among depositors who changed their minds about withdrawing money and came forward to redeposit them.

The world today is without such fears. All we need to do is to repeat FDR's success, not his failures. What is prevailing now is the phenomenon of robots replacing workers in factories which is prompting experts to predict the end of mechanical, not creative, work culture.

In humanity's eyes, civilization leads to prosperity, which grows when man enjoys more leisure, since he gets more time to think creative thoughts, a phenomenon that is otherwise not possible in a mechanical society that works round-the-clock. Ultimately, this would mean avoiding work that is sheer drudgery. Though IT jobs fetch a very good pay, one does not find Americans choosing jobs in that field as it is sheer drudgery. Whenever technology confers an advantage to the public, the latter must be able to turn that into profit. Technology is not one man's invention. It is a social invention. People think about something and try their best to improve its usage and one day, some man ends up discovering a better way of doing it. Technology is a collective property. What happens when a technology becomes popular is that the whole public gets to benefit by it, not a few. When knowledge belongs to the whole community, we must make sure that there is an equitable distribution of the benefits to the whole community.

This is true not only of technology but also of other fields like literature, philosophy and science. When man was a hunter-gatherer, he did not communicate by speech. Then at some point he developed language which became a common possession of the community. How can anybody appropriate what belongs to the whole community for the benefit of the few? But there are some people who try this and when they do so they are voluntarily shutting the door on themselves much like the decapitation of Charles I put an end to English monarchy.

Currently one is proud of exhibiting scientific methods. In trying to become 'scientific', social scientists aped the methods of the natural sciences, thereby missing the vision of the whole truth. They say their intention is to go back to interdisciplinary studies. When they see that the environment is disturbed, they try to set it right by the very methods that created the disturbance. Some 40 years ago, the Club of Rome gave a warning that the whole world paid attention to. The warning was well received and it sounded like a success, though a negative one. Their conceptions on the "Limits to Growth" and Sustainable development warn of danger. But it is strange to hear that growth has any limit. Do values like love, sweetness or goodness have any limits? These are positive values that grow in intensity as they expand. These qualities know of no limit. 'Limit' usually refers to negative qualities that are not under control. For example, the conception of health has no known limits. However, tolerance of diseases has a set limit.

As technology grows, it places more demands on the environment, which has adverse consequences. This is not to say technology per se should be avoided. Responsibility, rather, is the need of the hour. Not what we use but how we use it defines responsibility. The same holds true in the case of money. Its accumulation was traditionally looked down upon in Eastern philosophy. Such censure is all right when man behaves as a slave to Money. But not so much when Man rightly assumes mastership of the institution he created and adapts a responsible attitude towards using it.

Developing countries need a lot of money to eliminate poverty. But unless they earn that money themselves, it does not serve any purpose. Accepting aid from affluent donors may hurt the recipient's self-esteem and induce resentment, which history unfailingly demonstrates. Modern advancements in science and technology have immensely raised the volume of communications and knowledge both of which have enormous potential to create wealth. In the midst of all these, population has a positive role to play, contrary to what the world believes. Also, GDP is calculated in a way that ignores social and individual well-being. If an index that takes well-being and welfare into account is developed, the GDP figures of developing countries may surprisingly be far higher.

Speculation that serves to enrich a few through computer algorithm is not helping the economy and therefore needs to be abolished. The twin plagues of modern life which are stress and tension need to be eliminated. It is a fallacy to assume that technology will reduce tension, which is accomplished more by psychological well-being than by machines.

Organizations usually undermine their own ideals. A developing ideal forms an organization in the hope that the organization will foster its growth. It is true that organizations are the foundations of life and the greater the organization, the more effective



will be the results. However, what is true at the physical level is not always true at the mental level. However, when ideals are given a material form in the shape of an organization, they invariably work in a detrimental fashion.

The ideal of Indian Freedom serves as an example here. At the very beginning, it was predicted that Indian Freedom could be won without any violent struggle, which was done so on the strength of her spiritual traditions. Moreover, it was further believed that India invited foreigners to invade her so as to unite her territories. Before the British called her India, the term was not even known. At the time of independence, there were some 565 principalities within the territories of India.

Several attempts have been made throughout Indian history to physically unify the country. Those who believe in this school of thought further believe that since it was India who brought the foreign invaders, she would also evict them peacefully once her territorial integrity was assured. However, past experience from the last two centuries shows that freedom had to be won by violence. When the US declared herself independent, she had to safeguard that freedom by engaging in war with Britain. Moreover, there is the additional experience of Vietnam to support the argument in favor of violence. Under such circumstances, however it is a historical fact that India won her freedom through a vote in the House of Commons. The question is how did such a thing happen? Blood was certainly shed in Indian history but it was not shed fighting the British. The British Government did not come to India with a view to conquer. The East India Company came to India for trade and found scope for taking over the administration, since most Indian rulers were inefficient. When the Mogul rule disintegrated, the British intruded, more for the purpose of maintaining law and order than with a view to rule.

Had Britain chosen to fight in 1947, a war could not have been avoided. However, Britain chose not to fight. The British must be generously credited for this. It was a peaceful transition, the likes of which history has not witnessed. There is a lesson for the whole world in that one act of historical significance. In 1848 Karl Marx asked the whole working class to revolt against the Capitalist class. His call was acted upon only in 1917. At that time the power of the call and proletarian readiness to act were very much evident. It did not go unnoticed by European governments which immediately set to work reviving working class living conditions. That robbed the Third International of much of their demands. The U.S went one step ahead and asserted that they could prove the superiority of Capitalism. By lifting the living standards of working class people, they effectively eliminated Communism from the American soil. Precisely how did they manage this? By paying their workers more, which never happened in Soviet Russia.

A civilized nation avoids bloodshed, which requires the use and application of the powers of Reason. By 1950 China emerged as a republic and by strengthening Stalin's hands, further challenged world peace. When she acquired nuclear power, her threat to world peace worsened. It would have remained a grave threat had the U.S not sought the Chinese market for trading. A political threat leading to military conflict was avoided through a trade initiative. The confrontation between Israel and Palestine is also amenable to such an initiative. Singapore has shown us the way to attain prosperity. Though she accepted

democracy, she imposed many disciplines on her citizens to generate prosperity. It worked and yielded great prosperity. Similar solutions can be worked out for India-Pakistan and Israel-Palestine.

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The question is, are these conflicts beyond the power of reason to solve? The Soviet government suppressed news and facts and presented to the world a picture of itself which was not true. In Nazi Germany, Hitler used propaganda to project a false picture of Germany that worked till the end of World War II. However, these lies were exposed in the course of time and truth emerged triumphant. Countries that accuse other countries of lying are themselves not above lying. International diplomacy has a habit of distorting truth into blatant lies for official purposes. The time has come for global governments to realize this truth and change their policy into one of telling truth.

A contest held in Ukraine found speaking the Truth occupied the first place. No compromise of whatever kind should be allowed in this matter. What we call culture involves progressing from the hunter-gatherer stage to a stage where values are predominant. When the physical man relates to the collective and becomes subservient to it, he transfers the physical violence in him to the collective authority which brings it under the control of collective regulation known as Law. The knowledge of Greece transformed into Roman Law, which strengthened the Roman Empire. Violence morphed into Law over time and social power grew by trade, symbolized by the power of money. In its early days money was represented by coins and later on shifted to paper currency. This shift was effected by the Chinese 1000 years ago. Now it has taken the form of digital currency. When Americans took to European science, technology got a boost.

When it comes to solving the problems the earth faces, man should fully employ the power of Reason. This may require that he does not repeat his past errors and that he benefits from his past positive experiences. From this point of view, it may not be all that inexplicable that India won her freedom by legal processes. From being a trading colony, she became a democracy. The British Empire was really only an imperial version of global government. Had Britain continued expanding her political empire with a democratic streak, she surely would have paved the way for global government. But in the course of time she handed over the power to U.S.A, who established herself as a superpower with money power. Ultimately, money must be made to serve man, if global government is to be established.

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