

DAY# 01



An Institute for Civil Services

IAS MAINS 2022

MAINS SAMP**ORNA**

AN INNOVATIVE  
APPROACH OF  
**ESSAY WRITING**  
*for* **UPSC**

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*including*  
**MODEL HINTS OF  
UPSC ESSAY PAPER 2021**

## What is an Essay?

- Essay is a thematic, focused, relevant, analytical and creative write up on some topic expressing an author's view. An essay is self-contained and a complete write up in itself. The points of arguments and exploration of dimensions of theme and inferences drawn should be organically connected as an evolving body like an evolutionary process from childhood, through adolescence, youth to maturity. An essay is not plain statement of facts, events or phenomenon, but an assessment of points and counterpoints on them with reasoning, causation and way forward.

## Types and formats of an Essay

1. Essays have traditionally been sub-classified as formal and informal.
2. Essays are commonly used as literary criticism, political manifestos, learned arguments, observations of daily life, recollections, and reflections of the author.
3. Almost all modern essays are written in prose, but in olden days many works of verse were also dubbed as essays (e.g., Alexander Pope's An Essay on Criticism and An Essay on Man).
4. Essays have today become part of the tests to gauge students' ability to think, articulate, present and analysts in various admission tests in the universities and competitive examinations.

**We are primarily concerned about the last type mentioned i.e point number 4.**

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## Do's & Don'ts

### Do's

- **Structure:** An essay is a structured write up, so you must have clearly delineable introduction, main body (description) and conclusion as essential parts of an essay.
- **Focus and relevance:** An essay is thinking in orbit, which means that the write up should be focused and relevant to the central theme and its dimensions.
- **Original:** An essay should mostly be formed by your understanding and perceptions and not be based on totally borrowed opinions.
- **Organic Connection:** An essay should be marked by connect between the ideas paragraph after paragraph. To be more precise an essay should grow with organic connect from childhood, adolescence, youth, maturity and old age. An essay is not stand alone points; they must connect to the context and perspectives of the given topic.
- **Analytical framework:** Exploration of relevant dimensions with causation, points-counterpoints, logical evaluation, inferences etc.
- **Signposting:** A prefixed trajectory, path, direction marked by an orderly placement of point number 1, point number 2, point number 3, point number 4, point number 5 and point number 6 etc. it does not mean one needs give numbering to each aspect rather arrange all aspects in such a way that examiner should get the direction and order in your writing.
- **Consistency and Coherence:** Consistency and coherence helps to sustain our arguments without contradiction and conflict.
- **Effective Communication:** An essay should be marked by clarity and flow and so it should not have "silt" of bulky information or tough academic ideas. These things disturb the flow. A simple style, small sentences, appropriate vocabulary, an emotional appeal, quotes, punch lines and right thrust at right places etc. are some of the essentials of effective communication.
- **Critical Thinking:** Critical thinking, insight, understanding, consistency and coherence are the hallmarks of an essay.
- **Right placement of quotes:** Placement of right quotes at right places adds punch, thrust and value.

### Don'ts

- **Avoid long backgrounds:** Avoid giving a long back ground; come to the topic as soon as possible.
- **Avoid beginning paragraphs by borrowed opinions or quotes:** Avoid constructing/riding every paragraph with the help of quotations. Use of quotation in the beginning of intro and end of conclusion may be fine, or where you find most suitability and may add to impact. But avoid too much use of it. When you make a hypothesis in a paragraph and evaluate it logically, you can cite

statements and quotes within the paragraph for supporting your argument, but beginning the paragraphs with borrowed ideas or quotes should be avoided.

- ▶ **Avoid grammatical mistakes:** Avoid mistakes pertaining to grammar and syntax as far as possible.
- ▶ **Avoid political and ideological biases:** Neutrality and freedom from prejudice and bias are important benchmarks of rationality. Political or ideological affiliations should not influence your write up, but only facts, real life observations and established wisdom should guide you to a logical evolution and conclusion of the write up.
- ▶ **Don't lose emotional Control:** Don't get swayed by emotions, try to remain anchored in logic, rationality and wisdom.
- ▶ **Don't be unbalanced and biased:** In intellectual endeavours, a balanced and rational approach is the best approach. No doubt an essay should be analytical, draw inferences and make value judgments, yet it should not only be emotionally balanced (anger, revenge, retribution, abuse, naming and shaming should be avoided) and politically neutral (obsession, fetish, bias, prejudice, contempt, outlandish views right or left should be avoided)
- ▶ **Avoid bombastic words:** Ornamental words may be fine at some places, but the beauty of communication lies in simplicity.
- ▶ **Avoid irrelevant contents and references:** Dragging irrelevant ideas without connect to the topic, central idea or the theme should be avoided.
- ▶ **Out of the box thinking should not be out of the context:** Avoid being too far off the theme in the name of out of the box thinking.
- ▶ **Avoid one-upmanship and self righteousness:** In other words show respect to the ideas that are different from your ideas, yet relevant in their own way. You may critically evaluate a rival idea, but cannot demean it.

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## How do we develop essays: STEPS

- **Step 1:** We should note the key words of the title and understand and restate in more understandable way.
- **Step 2:** We should try to understand the apparent meaning of the key words separately and collectively.
- **Step 3:** We should try to understand the underlying meaning and dimensions of the topic by asking questions, agreeing, disagreeing and connecting it with practical experiences and observations.
- **Step 4:** We should identify the context of the topic (the big tree to which the idea belongs) and various dimensions and perspectives on the topic.
- **Step 5:** We should identify the Central idea of the topic and its sub dimensions.
- **Step 6:** We should try to choose the “signposts” through which we will steer ahead our understanding, perceptions, views and arguments on the topic. How will the points follow 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 etc..
- **Step 7:** We should seek organic connection among the points so as they do not appear to be isolated or standalone points. So we not only decide about the ordering of our arguments (paragraphs/dimensions), but also how best they can be organically connected so as to evolve organically (in a connected way) from childhood, through adolescence, youth to maturity and old age, ie., from introduction, through description to conclusion.

## Understanding Key Terms

### ● Context

Context is knowing the terrain and locating a subject to its big picture and roots, conceptual, ideological, historical, cultural and socio-politico-economic background. Whenever an idea or an event is to be understood, explained and analysed, firstly it is important to understand its context. After finding the context, it is very important to grasp various perspectives (various ways/strands of thinking on a given issue) on an issue. To understand an issue, it must first be situated in its context. The dictionary gives an example – “It is important to see all the fighting and bloodshed in dramas/ plays in historical context.” Or another example-Any remark which we give may suit the occasion- happy moments are expressed through different set of words and expressions and sad moments are explained with different ones.

### ● Perspective

We do not see things as they are, but we see them as we are. This is to say, in the words of Friedrich Nietzsche, “There are no facts, only interpretations.” Each person does see the world in a different way. There is not a single, unifying, objective truth. We are all limited by our perspective.” Therefore, to explore various dimensions and ways to look on given theme, we should have an open mind and intellectual wisdom and courage to peep into an idea, subject or phenomenon in its totality.

## Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is smarter way of thinking, thinking more, thinking differently, thinking beyond the apparent, having a third eye to subjects, events and phenomena. The ability to think critically is what makes us capable of tackling new challenges or even the old challenges with innovation and creativity. Critical thinking pushes us to make deep enquiry, thinking beyond the apparent and going on to a higher order thinking to make educated value judgments with discretion and scruple. Critical thinking is not just criticizing the extant popular views and notions, but weighing them on ethical, moral and practical criteria; appreciating the "goodness" in them and "pointing out their limitations."

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## # Examples of Art and Craft of Essay

### Example 1: Philosophical Essay

- **A society gets the values that it rewards.**

- ▶ **Key words:** Society, Values, Rewards- independent meanings are easy to understand.
- ▶ **Collective reading:** It is about the value system that a society embraces and covets.
- ▶ **Context:** The context is changing values and a wide perception that there is general decline in social value system.
- ▶ **Perspectives:** There are different understandings on change. Some changes are taken as good and some are bad. There are different ways to see various facets of changes between the old generation and new generation and also among new generation.

#### **Signposts:**

- ▶ There is nothing permanent except change.
- ▶ Change leads to intergenerational clash on values, mores, manners and purpose of life, limits of decency and freedom etc.
- ▶ What is meant by values and why are they important in a society? What are good and positive values and what are bad and negative values?
- ▶ Are values eternal and absolute or do they change according to requirements and perceptions of changing times?
- ▶ Why is there a general perception of decline in social value system? Is it real or due to intergenerational gap?
- ▶ What are the manifestations of change and decline in the social value system? What are the consequences?
- ▶ Is society rewarding bad values? Do more and more people succeed by using unfair means and even then, they are powerful, wealthy, respected and honoured? Is the family bond is weakening and sanctity of institutions like marriage is coming under pressure? Is the element of mission in professions like defense service, teaching and practice of medicine is getting diluted for material gains? Have the leaders become more self-seeking rather than being selfless? Are women being brutalized and commodified? Is materialism, luxury, comfort, self-indulgence replacing pursuit of spiritual and stoic elements of life? What are the consequences.
- ▶ Compare and contrast the value systems of past and present
- ▶ What are the reasons behind such changes?
- ▶ What are the determinants of social value system?
- ▶ How can we make a society better in values by reducing the conflict between the old and new values and by honouring the time-tested eternal values like love,

care, sympathy, empathy, benevolence, sacrifice and philanthropy and adopting the noble notion of live and let live?

### **Critical Thinking**

- How to adopt changes without dismantling the good and beautiful things of the past? Is individualism better than a sense of collective well-being? Is westernization modernization? How much attention we need to pay to what is called Indian culture, Indian ethos and Indian identity? Is an individualistic and cosmopolitan society better than a tradition one?

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GS SCORE



## Example 2: Current Affairs based topic

### ● There are never ever any winners in trade war.

- **Key words:** Trade, war, winners - Separate reading of the key words is easy to understand
- **Collective reading of key words:** Trade wars do not benefit the warring factions/ parties.
- **Context:** Present wave of economic nationalism and protectionism, especially US policy on Chinese, Indian and Japanese imports.
- **Perspectives:** The proponents of economic liberalism and globalization have changed their policies because of huge trade deficit and loss of domestic jobs translating into people's discontentment in their country. Also, there is rising contempt for liberalization and globalization due to inequality in developed economies. But the protectionist policies may not be good in the medium and long run, despite serving the electoral constituency for a while and saving a few bucks in foreign exchange. Protectionist policies are inefficient and give sub-optimal solutions to trade and business. They would also lead to retaliatory moves by the targeted countries and that would in turn disrupt global economic growth and cooperation for peace and prosperity.

#### Signposts:

- **The background:** The present US protectionist tariffs, China's and India's retaliation; concerns expressed by experts
- The reason of US economic nationalism in particular and some other developed countries in general.
- The effects of new protectionist policies on the US economy: Benefits and losses
- The effect on the Chinese economy and China's counter moves; counter moves of countries like Japan, South Korea, Australia, Brazil etc.
- The historical experiences about the trade wars— a reflection and analysis on gains and losses- the case of US and the case of closed economies.
- The effects of present wave of trade restrictions and retaliatory policies in the form of tariff and non-tariff barriers for targeted countries in particular and global trade and growth in general.
- Why protectionism is not optimal solution for growth and employment? Theoretical and practical basis.
- Effects on the Indian economy of trade wars.
- The views of contemporary experts and leaders on economic nationalism.
- **The way forward:** Chinese assurances to US; ongoing efforts to promote free trade; the pressure within US from pro free trade lobbies and US Business interests; the chances of interventions of the WTO.

#### Critical thinking:

- Underlying "America First" principle is a concern among the policy makers about rise of Chinese power and waning power of the US. Bring back the past glory of America would not be easy.

- The uncertain fate of multilateralism and globalization.
- The effects of rise of new trade blocs and exclusion of the US.
- The prospects and challenges of China as a new rising power.
- Will trade still remain an engine of growth?
- Will domestic demand led growth turn to be a new prescription?

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GS SCORE

## Model Hints of UPSC Paper 2021

### Section - A

#### 1. The process of self-discovery has now been technologically outsourced.

**When I discover who I am, I'll be free."**

**— Ralph Ellison**

Self discovery has been an important endeavour of human beings since the origin of the Homo sapiens for self growth and civilizational progress. Self discovery means knowing who I am and what are my strengths and weaknesses, what is the purpose of my life, what are the things I am passionate about and what makes me happy? And things like that. It has helped human beings in refining and honing up their knowledge, wisdom, creativity, imagination and vision. The process of self discovery has enriched human life and transformed the into a beautiful place.

Self discovery helps us in self awareness and refinement, which in turn helps us in taking the charge of our impulses and emotions. This helps us in balanced responses to varied situations. The process of self discovery also helps us to understand nature and the world around us better. It also helps us in meaningful communication with living and inanimate objects. The more we understand and appreciate ourselves, the more benevolent and broad hearted we become.

Self discovery is a ladder to emancipation. It changes our way on looking things, our attitude and approach. It helps us to be free from fear. Self discovery eventually leads to liberation and bliss. All the efforts for self discovery are aimed at discovering our innate qualities, about our real self and the good and the evil inside us. It helps us to know about our tastes and passions, about our aspirations and expectations and about our strengths, weaknesses and innate potentials etc. Self discovery gives us a better wisdom to understand the world and society. If we understand about our own self, it helps us to understand what are the instincts, impulses, desires, whims and fancies that drive other human beings because they are just like you in their raw form. It is self discovery followed by efforts for refinement and improvement that make a difference between the accomplished human beings and others.

The process of self discovery involves lot of pondering, reflection, introspection and brooding over our real self and substantial questions of life and the world. It is a process that requires looking inside and listening to our inner voices. It requires feeling, experiencing and realization. In a way self discovery involves both an intellectual as well as spiritual faculties. It is about our body, mind, heart and soul.

There are no check lists for self discovery. But to give our efforts of self discovery an order, we may begin with visualizing our ideal self; asking questions from us; identifying what we value about ourselves; making efforts for knowing more; learning and trying new things; exploring our passions; evaluating our skills, strengths and weaknesses; and Keeping a track of our follies and maintaining a progress journal. We may add yoga and meditation to the list because these two help in focusing, reflection and introspection apart from helping

us in self communication. The job of self discovery involves all- mind, body, heart and soul. Self discovery therefore, involves 'tapasya' (penance) and 'sadhana' (practice).

Technology changed the way self discovery is done. People started resorting to scientific methods and gadgets for doing various things in life. Technology has helped to carry about day-to-day errands of life with more convenience, comfort and ease. Today in the era of internet, social media and digital platforms including Whatsapp and Facebook, people are increasingly using technology for gaining knowledge about everything from social, political, economic and scientific developments to health, entertainment and various aspects of life including sports, yoga, meditation, philosophy and spiritualism. Technology has also facilitated us to recognize and pursue our passions, especially those which we like and which give us maximum happiness and satisfaction. The ease with we can discover and know things is tempting. We give too much time on these platforms on new- age gadgets that we have little time to explore and actualize our innate capabilities and potentials.

We evaluate and gauge the worth of things on the basis of endorsements and likes on Whatsapp and Facebook. We use various technologies and models based on computer science and software to discover and assess our aptitude, intelligence quotients and emotional quotients. Technology has become overarching in our lives. People rely more on computers, technological simulations and models to tests and discover their aptitude, strengths and weaknesses and potentials. In this sense we have outsourced our self discovery to technology.

But technology has created a lot of dependence. We cannot think of any of our acts or even our enquiry, thought processes, knowledge and wisdom without technological aid. People rely on technology even for self discovery both consciously and unconsciously with the belief that it has a scientific logic behind it. Technology also has greater precision and so greater reliability to predict about things including human beings. But, software and computer based methodology cannot completely and conclusively gauge and measure a human being and her/his capabilities and potentials, which are by very nature unfathomable and infinite.

Underassessment may happen because each individual is unique and software programmes cannot be programmed for all the types. Is it possible to find why an aspiring singer Ashok Kumar turned out to be an actor of repute and his brother, Kishor Kumar, an aspiring actor became a great singer? Which technological programme could have visualized a shy and hesitant man Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi becoming the greatest leader of the twentieth century? Can any software tell why Bill Gates chose to be a school dropout when he was aspiring to be an innovator and entrepreneur or Steve jobs became a disenchanted hippy first and then how did he become a great designer and innovator? It was self discovery that made them what they became. They listened to their passion and urge for creativity. They did not think on set patterns around them. They took a plunge and moved forward and in the process their self was gradually revealed. Our physical inabilities and penury do not stop us from self discovery. Stephen Hawkings with cerebral Palsy explored and traversed become the greatest physicist of our time. Our past is not a constraint in self discovery. Men evolve if they continuously learn and grow. Ashoka turned to Dhamma after winning bloody wars.

Self discovery remains incomplete unless we reflect and introspect and listen to our inner voices or conscience. As long as we do not allow our consciousness to understand, appreciate and feel things, our self discovery remains incomplete. Steve Jobs rightly said, "Don't let the noise of others' opinions drown out your own inner voice." Listening to inner voice helps us to find ways when we are lost and clueless. It also helps us in knowing our

self. The inner voice helps us to know the good from the evil just from unjust and fair from unfair. Shel Silverstein summarise this in the following lines:

*"There is a voice inside of you  
That whispers all day long,  
"I feel this is right for me,  
I know that this is wrong."  
No teacher, preacher, parent, friend  
Or wise man can decide  
What's right for you—just listen to  
The voice that speaks inside."*

Thus externally aided efforts for self discovery have great limitations. There is a very big world inside us and we need to be honest and courageous to explore it. It means knowing about our real self i.e, our own attitude and judgments.

The process of self discovery was primarily based in the past on innate capacity of the body mind, heart and soul. There was no need for any external aid for this. Gurus helped their pupils in self discovery in their Ashrams or Gurukuls. They just didn't teach a given syllabus, but prepared students for life according to their innate potential. They gave all kinds of exposure to them from shastras (scholarly books) to shastra (arms), from yoga and meditation to different skills like swimming, sports, aakhet (hunting) and yayavari (wandering) and even begging. What differentiated the extraordinary from the ordinary human beings was their success or failure in using or not using human faculties optimally.

Self discovery could be done in several ways including sitting in silence and brooding and thinking, or just wandering and observing things, watching and experiencing nature and the world in all its beauty and ugliness without any resistance or prior judgment. It may be achieved by doing, participating, interacting and experimenting. We can use technology to aid our efforts of self discovery. But reflection and introspection would always remain an essential part.

Mahatma Gandhi believed 'the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others'. Mahatma Buddha wandered to understand and experience pains and happiness with more sensitivity. Mahatma Buddha believed that better understanding of the desires of life and sufferings could give a clue to self discovery. He chose wandering, observing and meditation. Thus, he found the eight fold path to live a better and meaningful life.

Self discovery is also possible by experimenting with new ideas. Our curiosity, spirit of enquiry and experiment and doing seemingly impossible things may help in self discovery. Thomas Edison, the greatest inventors of all times experimented and failed many times to actualize his potential as a scientist. In the process of experimenting and failing and succeeding he learnt and grew. Learning and growing is an essential part of the process of self discovery.

Breaking from the shackles of structured thinking also helps in self discovery. All change leaders and dreamers did this. They think beyond structured thinking and what is prevalent. Rosa Parks or Martin Luther King thought that racism is a social ill and there are better ways to make a free and just society. They had the courage and ability to visualize and think ahead of their time. They valued justice, equality and dignity and they worked for that. Such people who listen to their inner calls and honour their dreams and passions are ready to go extra miles. They fall several times and get up several times. Every fall and rise offers them with umpteen moments of reflection and introspection. They learn and grow and finally they discover their self. Many of them we call "realized souls."

The process of self discovery requires being polite, grounded and honest. Therefore, our confession and openness about our follies do matter. A denial mode and obduracy about our follies and limitations would not help. Confession is the first step towards resurrection and our endeavour of self discovery. The constant denial mode about our weaknesses and living in a fancied world would impede self discovery. Self discovery can happen best when we keep an open mind and confront the realities.

Thus, the process of self discovery is essentially a Tapsya or Sadhana using the words from Indian tradition. It can never come without willingness to search and enquire and without introspection, reflection, rigour, knowledge, wisdom, openness, exposure and experience. Hermann Hesse Nobel Prize winner for literature once spoke, "I have been and still am a seeker, but I have ceased to question stars and books; I have begun to listen to the teaching my blood whispers to me." How self discovery is essentially an inner process becomes clear from the experience of Herman Hesse while watching trees: "For me, trees have always been the most penetrating preachers. I revere them when they live in tribes and families, in forests and groves. And even more I revere them when they stand alone. They are like lonely persons. Not like hermits who have stolen away out of some weakness, but like great, solitary men, like Beethoven and Nietzsche. In their highest boughs the world rustles, their roots rest in infinity; but they do not lose themselves there, they struggle with all the force of their lives for one thing only: to fulfill themselves according to their own laws, to build up their own form, to represent themselves." That is self discovery and not just plain watching of a tree, isn't it?

## 2. **Your perception of me is a reflection of you; my reaction to you is an awareness of me.**

**"We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."— Oscar Wilde**

It is rightly said that we do not see things as they are but as we are. Our thoughts and actions tell who we are. The opinions, views, and statements of others reflect their perceptions. Although we are sometimes overwhelmed and feel inspired by other's statements, at other occasions, we are hurt and lose confidence and self statement as somebody said something unpleasant about us. People can praise me or criticize me, but it is their view. They can be gracious or ungracious, it is their choice. They can be responsible or irresponsible, it is their preference. There is no reason either to be overwhelmed or bogged down by what others are saying about us as long as we know about ourselves. This does not mean not listening to others at all. It is about how do we react and respond to what others say and think about us.

How do I react to what you say about me depends on my maturity and self awareness. If I am mature I can understand your intentions and motives. I can control my emotions like anger and revenge. I will not breach the limits of decency and grace even if I am angry. I have a strong sense of humour. I can give a clownish smile on your stupidity and foolishness. I will not blame you for your envy and jealousy. I will not lose my cool, calm and poised. Even if I will have to call a spade, a spade I would prefer to remain polite and respectful. Whatever I would say in reaction to your statement it would be candid and measured. Even if I will have take action against you I would remain human. This is quintessential me, my "self", my persona and my character. I would not allow myself to be swayed, to fall from grace and to be weird and insane. All this because I have grown mature. This is because I have allowed my learning curve to always move upward. I am patient and keep my mind open. I am not in any haste to win the argument or take revenge. I know about my intents, motives, objectives and destination. My reaction to your statement reflects my "self awareness".



If we are aware about ourselves, we at least know about our intentions, motives, actions, strengths and weaknesses etc. Since we have our own honest understanding about ourselves, it is not very consequential in our life what others are saying about us. What is important is our own awareness. Our own awareness helps us in building our responses. We may appear unassuming, senseless, impractical or unwise to others. But if we understand what we think, say, we do not need any endorsement from others. As long as we remain honest, sincere rational and dignified in what we do, it hardly matters what others say or think about it.

Human beings want endorsement from others about their opinions and actions. It is a general human weakness to seek praise and commendation for their views and acts. But this is a simplistic understanding. No doubt, it matters whether people are critical, supportive, ill or well intentioned. It is because their statements can hurt us; affect our self confidence, morale and enthusiasm. They may demoralize and de-motivate or they may inspire and instill confidence. It depends on whether their statements are positive or negative. But this is reflection of our poor understanding about our own self and the world.

It needs to be understood that our facts and realities do not change if somebody says something to blur and falsify it or commend or criticize us. Truth remains and is louder than propaganda. If we are wrong, we are wrong and if we are right, we are right. The realities do not change on the basis of commendation or criticism from others. If we remain steadfast on our principles, values conviction and faith, it does not matter what others say. We move on our path as we like and visualize. But this requires a steel frame of mind to remain unperturbed. It requires a high level of wisdom, tolerance and endurance. All these things shape how we take things and how we respond.

When it comes to perceptions, they are often built on judgments based on limited information, biases, prejudices motives and intents. Perceptions are also influenced by our grooming, education socialization and personal experiences etc. Our perceptions also depend on our attitude. It is sum total of all these factors. Our perceptions are private to us and reflect more about us rather than the truth itself. We see things as we are and not as they are. It is because our perceptions act as a fence, beyond which we cannot see, think or appreciate. It might be possible in very exceptional cases where minds are free and open, neutral and not judgmental. In this case our perceptions may be closer to reality. But it is rare. Thus, what you say about me is your perception. It tells about your persona and character, i.e. who you are. Why should I bother about it except when it really pinches? But I would not react, and try to respond even if it hurts because I have become mature due to myself awareness. I can balance my emotions and restrain my animal instincts, I am civilized and disciplined.

Goodness is about character - integrity, honesty, kindness, generosity, moral courage, and the like. More than anything else, it is about how we treat other people. But at times it is not appreciated. At such times your tolerance may meet its limit and you may be prompted to react with anger. If somebody is continually perpetrating and proliferating negative ideas and perceptions about you, you are well within your rights to respond. Your goodness should not be taken as your weakness. But reaction just breeds anger and frustration. It destroys your cool and calm. It blurs your wisdom. Many of us are energetic and physically robust and while arguments and counter arguments heat up, they brace for physical brawl and fighting. Some of us have a very limited tolerance level. All these are signs of immaturity. Reactive ways are harmful.

We cannot be responsible for other's behavior and perception which reflects their inner self and wisdom. The way they see things is the byproduct of their development and evolution. We have no control on others way of looking at things. At best we can inspire or educate them if they are amenable. But generally perceptions are hard to change, especially when somebody is unprepared to be wiser. In Sanskrit a Nitishloka say's, "Yasya pragyan swayam

nasti, shastram tasya karoti kim (those who have no penchant for wisdom, it is futile to educate them).” In a more down-to-earthly way the Hindi idiom tells more- Bhains ke aage bin bajaye, bhains rahi pagurai (Playing Veena in front of a buffalo serves no purpose because the buffalo is neither willing nor capable of understanding it).

The plane of our existence becomes more refined and our responses far more curreted as we grow mature. This is the stage of life when we know our possibilities and limitations, opportunities and threats, strengths and weaknesses and our own aspirations and expectations. We are better equipped to handle others and variety of situations with given resources and constraints. And at the old stage when we look back we have pride for some things we did and achieved and regret for others, which we did or failed to do. By then we understand that the ultimate goal of life is happiness and bliss and a sense of fulfillment. This bliss flows from peace, patience self control, emotional balance and a feeling of giving and contributing, acting as an agent of progress, change and development. Unbound satisfaction comes if we bring smiles to faces around us. These are the things one needs to be aware about. This helps in balanced responses.

There is nothing wrong in stating and sharing our own perceptions as long as we maintain grace and dignity and do not mean to hurt or de-mean or demoralize intentionally. Our statements lose their worth when they are abusive, disrespectful, ill motivated and ill intentioned. People make irresponsible statements because they have a constricted, narrow, biased, motivated and untrue perception about somebody. People may do so due to ignorance, jealousy, envy and revenge. People may do so due to lack of wisdom and maturity. It reflects about them. There is no reason to return their views in the same coin because our reactions and responses reflect our self awareness. Other’s folly should not compel us to fall from the grace.

It is good to remain emotionally balanced for a measured and mature reaction and response. We should never allow our negative animal instincts and impulses to blur our wisdom and sway us. It is better to understand our weaknesses and strengths and respond on the basis of self awareness and wisdom rather than on the basis of provocations and external stimuli. At times our response is silence, at other times it is measured statements and yet at other times our response is indifference or simply “I don’t care”.

We are not in the control of what others think and do, but we cannot deny our responsibility for what we think and do. Others may say anything but how do we process it and respond to it is a matter of our choice based on our wisdom and self awareness. Nevertheless, human beings are reactive rather than trying to be responsive most of the times. It is because of our exalted egos and uncontrolled human impulses and animal instincts battles, even when there is no insecurity.

We also need to be spiritual to understand the cosmic design which has assigned a value and responsibility to each of us. Under the design there is an underlying interdependence among all forms of lives. It is also necessary to understand that the nature has designed the universe on the premise of mutual coexistence. Life is for living and letting others to live. Nature has bestowed on each of us infinite capacity and possibilities. There is no need to win or lose, but to live life well and engage in the pursuit of excellence. Living a sadist life is undesirable. Remaining positive is like spreading light and fragrance, being negative means going into darkness. These things need maturity to realize and they come at a higher level of maturity and spirituality, which is a stepping stone to self awareness.

The more we are aware who we are and what is the purpose and goal of our life, the more our responses become refined. At a higher level of spiritual living goodness does not require reciprocity. We maintain our emotional balance for the sake of peace, happiness and well being. Life is a short journey and we do not have time to waste in arguments and day-to-day shanty wrangles and brawls. Emotional balance and self awareness save us from negativities of others. Lord Shri Rama is an outstanding example to emulate. He fought a



battle for truth without falling from grace. Walter Anders rightly points out, "Bad things do happen; how I respond to them defines my character and the quality of my life. I can choose to sit in perpetual sadness, immobilized by the gravity of my loss, or I can choose to rise from the pain and treasure the most precious gift I have - life itself."

### 3. **Philosophy of wantlessness is Utopian, while materialism is a chimera.**

**"To be content with little is difficult; to be content with much, impossible."  
— Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach**

Utopia is an ideal commonwealth whose inhabitants exist under seemingly perfect conditions. The essential elements of Utopia include a place of ideal perfection especially in laws, government, and social conditions; an impractical scheme for social improvement; and an imaginary and indefinitely remote place.

Wants are real. Human life has certain basic needs necessary to satisfy and meet their existentialist needs. Roti, Kapada aur Makan (bread, cloths and shelter) is an idiom which aptly summarizes our basic needs. Wants are so essential part of human society that thinking about wantlessness is possible only in case of saints and sages; for ordinary people wants are the driving force. Even sages and saints also need to survive bare minimum of life to survive. Wants remain real and so much so that there is a never ending race for material acquisition. In the industrial societies material acquisition is taken as a mark of reward for hard work and an evidence of success. It is only in imagination that state of "wantlessness" could exist, in real life it is a misnomer. It is impossible to have a world in which individuals and societies have no wants, no desires and no longing. It is a utopia indeed.

It is widely accepted that the mother of all inventions in human society is necessities and wants. These inventions led to progress in human civilization. They improved the ease and comfort in living. The basic needs of Roti, Kapada and Makaan (bread, cloths and housing) are essentials and the economists describe it as necessities. Nobody can do without it. As more and wealth is created and living standard of the people rise, the need for comforts arises. This creates wants for new things. Further, as progressive industrial societies are interested in improving the working and living conditions, they make demand for comforts like fans, air conditioners, coolers, canteens, cafes, modern modular kitchens and equipment like fridge, micro ovens, water boilers so on and so forth. Wants still increase.

Materialism is the driving force of all economic activities in all the societies. The extend of material acquisition define the success of individuals. The size and quality of individuals is measured by material acquisitions. Nations are described advance or backward on the basis of their "wealth creation". Nobel Prize winner Nigerian poet and Playwright Wole Soyinka aptly described it thus: We live in a materialist world, and materialism appeals so strongly to humanity, no matter where. There is a race between nations as well as individuals to possess more and more.

And if anybody talks about the downsides of this blind pursuit of materialism, many people describe it as unrealistic and too much idealistic. H. L. Mencken, for example says, "It is not materialism that is the chief curse of the world, as pastors teach, but idealism. Men get into trouble by taking their visions and hallucinations too seriously." No individual or society can do without adequate wherewithal for the life to get going. And if somebody wants to ignore material requirements of life, life becomes difficult. Nobody else could fulfill the needs of an individual to satisfaction level. No donations, no amount of social security or good Samaritans can help meet an individual needs with as much certainty as own resources.

Juxtaposed against the approach is Gandhian approach which believes in minimalism (of needs) and simplicity (of life). Gandhi was opposed to consumerism. Gandhi differentiated between wants and needs. He believed that human beings should try to consume only as much as it is necessary to fulfill the basic needs. There should not be lust for acquisition of more and more things to quench our greed. He said, "The world has enough for man's need but not enough for man's greed!" Gandhi believed that overexploitation of natural resources is not good and sustainable. He believed in self sustained villages, small and cottage industries and conservation of natural resources. There are many others who criticize "consumerism" of industrial societies.

The new economics believes in sustainable development where wants are to be met by growth of production, but the method of production would be based on mitigation of carbon footprints to avert climatic change. It emphasizes on conservation of resources, and adaption through the use of green technology and change in energy matrix towards renewable energy while increasing production.

From all these different schools of thought what emerges is that wants drive the economies and societies to continuously enhance production and create wealth. The need for raising the standard of living of the citizens has been an important goal for both nations and policy makers. In social value system also the households and individuals aspire for material well being as mark of their success.

However, materialism has its own downsides. It gives birth to consumerism and a never ending race for more and more acquisition leading to stress, rivalry, jealousy, envy and lack of leisure and quality time to 'live' life. Consumerism leads to a sense of deprivation among a large number of people who do not afford to buy necessities, comforts and luxuries. This gives birth to inferiority complex to many. Consumerism also leads to over exploitation of natural resources, huge waste products and pollution. To meet unbridled consumption demands, people resort to corrupt and unfair ways. In competition for more and more people give up ethical and moral norms.

The increasing wants are not affordable to all. Socio-economic inequality increases in the process of wealth creation in societies. Many households and individuals long for meeting their wants so as to satisfy their needs for necessities, comforts and luxury, but all of them do not afford it. It is because the wealth that is created is not shared equally. Some people make profit more than their share due to control on the means of production and monopoly on technology. The ordinary workers do not gain more than required for ordinary subsistence due to lack of entitlements like land and capabilities like education and skill. Market economies create a few well offs at the cost of large number of deprived people. The socio-economic divide and inequality in societies impinge on the hope and aspirations of many and often negatively affect their self esteem.

Amid the two extremes of thought processes, i.e., desirability and possibility of wantlessness on one hand and incessant and unending pursuit of material progress, there is a need to understand that both of these have their own fallacies. The fact is that wants are unlimited. In modern industrial societies as more and more inventions are done, more new products and designs come into existence. New wants are created with the help of bombardment of advertisement campaigns that create wants for the products without which people could have done otherwise. This leads to the birth of unbound consumerism which is in contradiction with the goals of sustainable development. This is because they increase not only carbon footprints, but also lead to overexploitation of natural resources on one hand and pollution and waste products on the other. It is reminded by the Club of Rome that there is "limits to growth."

The societies and individuals compete for creation of more and more wealth for higher growth, employment and better living standards. This is necessary to raise the living standards. But going beyond a limit in such a race takes the human society behind a running

chimera. The ultimate never comes and there are always new targets and golden treasures yet to be explored. The material pursuit has no end and it is infinitely enticing leading to lot of aberrations in our life such as lack of leisure, high speed, restlessness, stress and diseases. It often leads to use of unfair means and corrupt practices. While wealth is created, inequality also increases. Inequality leads to indebtedness, frustration among households and juvenile delinquency and criminal tendencies among the adolescent and youth living in slums.

At the end of all material pursuits, the achievements still seem to be less and inadequate. There is no end to this as long as we do not understand what we want from life. Fyodor Dostoyevsky writes in the Brothers Karamazov, "The world says: "You have needs — satisfy them. You have as much right as the rich and the mighty. Don't hesitate to satisfy your needs; indeed, expand your needs and demand more. This is the worldly doctrine of today. And they believe that this is freedom. The result for the rich is isolation and suicide, for the poor, envy and murder." The statement aptly summarizes the crisis in the modern societies.

People can live their life with satisfaction even with low level of material possessions. If they are able to have time to enjoy the fruits of their hard work, to maintain warm and love filled relationship and a sense of giving back and contributing they can be happier. If we are into the never ending race for material acquisition, we fail to get all these opportunities. An emptiness starts lurking inside even while we have too much of material things. We have instances of people going into depression even if they are materially extremely well, causing self hurt by drugs and alcoholism and in extreme cases committing suicide. The urgency of situation could be understood by the fact that Britain has to create a ministry of isolation for the isolated.

Wants are real and they need to be satisfied. Material pursuit is necessary to meet our wants. However, wealth creation and material acquisition could not be unbridled goals. A time must come when one decides to give priority to "living more" rather than "earning more". Living life for peace and happiness is better than always hankering for more material acquisitions. Blind pursuit of material well being is a blind alley. Life does not require too much to be beautiful and happy. We need a better art of living. Life requires satisfaction with what we have and also to be filled by love and warm relations. Giving back is a recipe for a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction. The sense of giving back and contributing to improve the world that we inherited is sublime.

It is also necessary to understand that the resources that we use for increasing our wealth without any limits, is borrowed from the future generations. We must replenish and conserve. And if we do not realize, we are putting our mother earth in danger which is facing unprecedented climatic change and more frequent natural disasters. Wantlessness is not possible, but minimalism is. Material pursuit need to be rationalized and made more socially responsible.

#### 4. The real is rational and the rational is real.

**To irrational principles, one cannot be loyal. Ideas that are not derived from reality cannot be consistently practiced in reality.**  
— Ayn Rand

Rationality means the quality of being based on or in accordance with reason or logic. Being rational means logically proving something before accepting or subscribing to it. Reason, in philosophy, refers to the faculty or process of drawing logical inferences. The term "reason" is also used in several other, narrower senses. Reason is juxtaposed against sensation, perception, feeling and desire. However the latter are considered as the faculties by which fundamental truths are intuitively apprehended. These fundamental truths are the

causes or “reasons” of all derivative facts. But the empiricist disagree. They put more faith on facts and a reasoned analysis.

Reality is physical as well as abstract. In common parlance real is what exists and proven by actual facts and evidence. It is the sum or aggregate of all that is real or existent within a system, as opposed to that which is only imaginary. The concept of reality is very broad and goes beyond physical forms. It is used to refer to the ontological status of things, indicating their existence. Philosophical questions about the nature of ‘reality’ or ‘existence’ or ‘being’ are considered as studied in ontology, a major branch of metaphysics revolves around questions whether only physical objects are real (i.e., Physicalism), whether reality is fundamentally immaterial (e.g., Idealism), whether hypothetical unobservable entities posited by scientific theories exist, whether God exists, whether numbers and other abstract objects exist, and whether possible worlds exist. Reality in wider sense is very comprehensive and confusing. It depends on our reasoning how do we see reality. In this sense real is rational and rational is real.

Nevertheless logic is a very strong weapon. It is used to approve or disapprove. It can reason out and explain. But it can also see reason and create evidence where it does not exist. The business of knowing the reality becomes confusing in the wake of varied logic and explanations by thinkers, intellectuals and practitioners regarding the same thing or idea or event or phenomenon. There is a variety of thought processes, each providing its own logic and reasoning. Since all kinds of views, opinions, understanding and perspectives do exist with their own logic, it appears that the real is rational and the rational is real. However, this assertion cannot be taken on face value.

Everything in nature and society of course, has logic of its own or if it is not there logic is devised by human ingenuity. Every phenomenon and event has a cause and effect. Rationality requires a scientific testing of the existing and apparent facts, the logic behind them and a cause and effect connection. But it is widely accepted view that even if people are not rational they rationalize their beliefs, actions and perspectives. Reality then becomes very difficult to ascertain and understand.

Rationality assumes significance due to several reasons. According to the great sage and philosopher, Socrates, “The beginning of wisdom is the definition of terms.” other thinkers also believe that if you can’t define something you have no formal rational way of knowing that it exists. Neither can you really tell anyone else what it is. The philosophers go up to the extent of saying that there is, in fact, no formal difference between inability to define and stupidity. Progress of the human society is predicated upon the proper functioning of a key element of the human mind that is reasoning. To believe something existing or potential as real, it is necessary to reason out.

Nevertheless, the limitations of rationality cannot be overlooked. First, feelings are vulnerable to rational thought. We cannot love and hate on the basis of rationality neither can we be happy or sad on the basis of rationality, it just happens. People are more ‘human’ than ‘rational’. People like to feel the excitement and thrill of every moment of their life, to be in love and to dream and imagine and to be passionate and insane about something. They do not find rationality as necessary, they like and love something, even if they are disillusioned later on, they are proven wrong and meet an unpleasant end, and that is all what it takes to be human. It is made quite clear from John Lennon’s statement, “I believe in everything until it’s disproved. So I believe in fairies, the myths, dragons. It all exists, even if it’s in your mind. Who’s to say that dreams and nightmares aren’t as real as the here and now? It is also notable that rational thoughts never drive people’s creativity the way emotions do. (Neil deGrasse Tyson). Romantic mindset is necessary to think beyond the visible frontiers and to imagine the infinite possibilities. Too much of logic and reason does not allow us to venture freely in the world of imagination and creativity.

The difference between rationality and reality is often blurred. Reality is what is seen, believed, and practiced even if that does not stand the test of reason. The beliefs and practices of tribes, groups, nations and societies have always belied reason and relied more on tradition, popular culture and fashion. People rely more on impulses, emotions, and passions rather than reason. Politicians very often play on people's emotions and passions rather than invoking their reasons. In the arena of post truth narratives based on untruth, prejudices biases and ulterior motives have become truer than the truth. This is facilitated by the advent of new technologies and platforms of communication. The talk of logic, reason and truth remain confined to books. A selected few may be interested in reason and intellectual enquiry. Majority is happy with uneducated and uninformed debates and discussions.

Things are not very different in our country. The issue based politics has given way to politics based on emotive issues. The public support is mobilized on the basis of provocative speeches and false commitments. Politicians are able to do campaigns on trivial and divisive issues. People clap and vote for them. A large chunk of media is involved in fake and paid news yet people watch them religiously and believe. People neither spare time nor are they interested in knowing the reality. The same youth who gather for sloganising in favour of such leaders are beaten in the streets by government police while they protest against government's failure to create employment. But still they have no questions as to why the priorities of the nations are relegated to back seat, why commitments during electioneering are not met and why non-consequential and retrograde issues have been brought to the fore.

Thus, it is not always correct to believe that real is rational and rational is real. The things as they stand in our society are mostly not in accord with reason and logic. It is hard to accept that people value reason over emotion, passion and personal choices. But this is also a reality. In worst case people are like the dumb driven cattle or in other cases they are under the impression of one or the other kind of opium. This drifts them away from both, reason and reality. People stop thinking and instead prefer to believe in anything being propagated and perpetrated. But in the process, rationality becomes a casualty.

Although we try to draw a line between rationality and reality, it is not easy. It is our beliefs, perceptions and choices that define reality for us. In the end we hold the things and thought processes that are dear to us or suit us. Reality becomes a matter of choice. Kilroy J. Oldster rightly says, "Life is fundamentally a mental state. We live in a dream world that we create. Whose life is truer, the rational man of action pursuing practical goals of personal happiness and wealth or the philosophic man who lives in a world of theoretical and metaphysical ideas? We ascribe the value quotient to our lives by making decisions that we score as either valid or invalid based upon our personal ethics and how we think and behave."

Education and our willingness to see beyond what we choose to believe is a way forward for meeting of reality with rationality. Education must lead us from the irresponsible opinion to true responsible judgment. It must lead us from chance and arbitrariness to rational clarity and intellectual order. In fact we cannot control how reality is interpreted by others and how realities evolve. Reality and rationality would, thus, sometimes remain in accord and sometimes in conflict. In all the cases we should remain nonchalant and happy with our own understanding and choices. But we should remain open to change and alternative ideas and possibility till it stands the test of reason. And reason should not be reduced to mere logic of convenience. Romance of life is important for creativity, change and progress, but bereft of reason things fall apart, it is only a matter of time.

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## Section - B

### 1. Hands that rocks the cradle rules the world

If the world is our "heart", the hands (mother's hands) that rocks the cradle rules the world (our hearts)..... and, for ever... till she lives... and even after that, as she continues to rain blessings incessantly on us from the heavens! This is the image of a mother who is kind, lovable, sacrificing, caring and giving without any expectation. And this does not require any explanation.

The above statement the title of the essay nevertheless, is not only about our love for our mothers but also because of her contribution in making each of us worthy and useful. The whole society should be grateful because she made us what we are. She has not brought us in the world, but also she held our hands till we stand on our own. She makes us "Raja Beta and ' Rani Beti' irrespective of all kinds of constraints and adversities. She raises our hopes and aspirations. She is our first mentor and the teacher and remains with us all along our lives. Her imprint is permanent on us. She is actually the ruler of the world.

The Hand That Rocks the Cradle refers to an 1865 poem titled: "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle" by William Ross Wallace. Nothing can be more beautiful wish for mothers and obeisance for their infinite love and their role not only in keeping the world going, but also in shaping the future actors and actresses in the theatre of world :

*Blessings on the hand of women!  
Angels guard its strength and grace.  
In the palace, cottage, hovel,  
Oh, no matter where the place;  
Would that never storms assailed it,  
Rainbows ever gently curled,  
For the hand that rocks the cradle  
Is the hand that rules the world.*

The author wishes that god bless all mothers and angels protect her as it is she who brings children in the world, nurtures, and shapes them and tries to make them useful and important. Thus, she is the actual ruler because the world moves due to her efforts to prepare the future leaders and citizens. And, all that, with unconditional love. That is why in these lines poet prays for the blessings of God for mothers without any distinction of their social status or place where they are living, in king's mansion or in poor man's hut. She is the procreator, she is one who nurtures and takes care of the offspring and holds their hand till they stand in the theatre of world on their own. If she does not do it, the world would be helpless. So she is the actual ruler of the world.

As we created market and industrial societies everything changed but mothers remained mothers in essence. They kept making this world beautiful, but there were constraints imposed by double responsibility, i.e. home making on one hand and jobs outside to fill the gap of income in the households or to get a self identity and expressions. Children are left for long hours with nannies or in play schools. Sometimes mothers are so busy that they do not have time to interact and play with their children. However, there is no substitute of mothers' interaction and play with children. In such cases children are deprived of their moments of joy and bliss filled with unfathomable love, trust and intimacy without any condition. Sometimes children feel alone and desolate. This pushes the unlucky ones

into different kinds of addiction and aberrations. Lives are spoiled in extreme cases of loneliness.

Although mothers have remained mothers since the origin of the universe and not changed despite technological changes and transformation of societies. It appears that the notion of motherhood had remained the same through ages and would never change in biological and social constructs; and not in case of human beings only, but all life forms. Mother's role was and is protecting the offspring, feeding, nurturing and helping them to stand on their own, and in flying and scaling the heights of the sky. To understand this we may visualize the offspring of birds and mother bird!

As a notion "mother" is something very reliable and reassuring, dependable and loving, caring, giving and sacrificing, and last but not the least taking and tolerating all hardships and pains with smile to save the offspring from all threats. Giving the best to the offspring, mothers are known since times immemorial to have always eaten the last and slept on floors for the comfort of their offspring. What else than these make the world a beautiful place and a livable place than these motherly attributes?

Mothers in this sense could be seen as eternal philosophers, mentors, teachers and role models! They really are the rulers if we pay heed, learn from them, appreciate and honour them. Mothers are held very high in our lives and imagination. But the plight of anemic mothers risking their lives during pregnancy with no access even to primary healthcare in the far flung areas and most of the villages in India. In the Indian patriarchal societies, mothers are respected but they are the last in the family preference list for health, nutrition and care. They give their "life" to the family without any expectation and silently struggle to collect water, fuel and fodder and run the kitchens irrespective of budgetary constraints. They are classified as non working even when they struggle throughout the day without counting hours and rewards for loving, caring, cleaning, washing, cooking and every thankless job. Are they rulers of the world? Isn't the high maternal mortality rate telling otherwise? And who bears the brunt of alcoholism and domestic violence? Today parents in general and mothers in particular are not able to enjoy the shades of the tree which they nurtured from sapling stage to grow and flourish. The sons and daughters-in-law have a overarching claim about "it's my life" so much so that in the evenings of their life parents are left alone, isolated and constrained. Mothers still play the role of 'Sita' for their 'Rams' as long as they are able to do.

And if we see the representation of women in the power structures and decision making from the households to Panchayati Raaj and further to assemblies and parliament, and government jobs to CEO ranks and files, we are extremely disappointed. Although women including mothers are held very high in our social and constitutional ideals, much remains to be seen on real ground about their empowerment and honour.

Mothers are great and outstanding in their roles. They certainly make us what we are. But if their say in life, from the family to parliament increases, we would be certainly better off, more loving, responsible and dutiful. Only then the hands that rocks the cradle would rule the world in true sense.

## 2. What is research, but a blind date with knowledge!

**"Research is seeing what everybody else has seen and thinking what nobody else has thought."**  
— Albert Szent-Gyorgyi

Man indulged in research and enquiry since times immemorial to understand the natural phenomenon and invent to better human life in particular and the world in general. The

ultimate goal of research is to unravel the truth. Research word is not more about knowing more about the existing and the known. This does not mean that it does not explore the unknowns. It does. However research is based on a premise that it is our ignorance that we do not know about things; things do exist in the grand design of the universe and cosmos. We know a very little fraction of that.

When the Ancient Greek Guru Socrates says the only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing he means that the domain of knowledge is very deep, and unfathomable and, therefore, it may have a beginning point, but it is endless. Any enquiry or research is really a blind date with knowledge because the more it reveals to us the more we become curious to see more. It becomes a never ending journey as the road to knowledge never ends. Somebody has rightly pointed out that the greatest enemy of knowledge is not ignorance; it is the illusion of knowledge.

But then why research is pursued? Is it senseless? No it is not. Curiosity is an essential quality of human beings. Human beings want to enquire about unknown phenomena, reason out and find cause and effect- relationship of anything and everything around them. But research is not an intellectual gymnastics and aimless wandering in the universe of knowledge. Research aims at targeted results and outcomes and improvement in technology, management, economy and governance etc. When we say research is a blind date with knowledge, this simply indicated the unhindered pursuit of enquiry that always goes on. It is, of course, not an aimless pursuit. 'Blind pursuit' here connotes a never ending journey in the universe of knowledge.

It is not just the spirit of enquiry that leads to research, but necessity of human life. Human beings from the stage of the Homo Sapiens to the stage of industrial society and growth of rational and modern man always tried to improve its living and working conditions. This was not a a choice to discover and invent, but a compulsion related to survival. Discovery of metals and inventing metallic equipment made hunting far more easier for the wandering species and thereafter for settled life of early civilizations and facilitating their mainstay, i.e., agriculture. This is well known how later on inventions of fire and wheel revolutionalized the way human beings lived and worked. Today these two inventions are seen as mother of all inventions.

Fatalism may be seen as the earliest era when the reason for everything unknown was ascribed to god. Man from the very beginning wanted to understand the natural phenomena- sometimes wondering and sometimes getting afraid. It is said to have created the notion of god to attribute all these unknowable phenomena to her/ his grand design. In fact this may be seen as the birth of Ontology and metaphysics.

Thereafter came the era of rationalists. The rationalists tried to find logical explanation of things and phenomena. Thus the spirit of scientific enquiry got prominence and scientific temper was promoted giving birth to the industrial revolution and the renaissance in Europe. We can trace the foundations of capitalism and market economy to these developments. We can also trace back the origin of republics, democracy and welfare state to this era.

The quest for knowledge or research is not a nascent idea born in industrial age. After human beings started settled life, they also hankered and longed for a new social organization. Human beings began efforts to devise ways for organized living by creating the notion of family and marriage. Beginning from limited consensually agreed rules, the human society devised more organized codes in the form of religion first and constitution later. Thus, we can say for sure that the pursuit of knowledge was not just for the sake of knowledge, but to a great extent this was need based and utilitarian. As it is said necessity is the mother of all inventions.

Research became more and more compulsive as it was realized that knowledge is power. In the competitive world marked by race for prosperity and hegemony, research became



indispensable for raising productivity and efficiency in the one hand and military superiority. Such researches helped the human societies in solving food and energy problems, but at the same time gave birth to too many undesirable consequences like pollution and climatic change. It also led to arms race which culminated in creation of weapons of mass destruction and other sophisticated weapons including atomic power which could annihilate the human society in a few moments.

The spirit of enquiry and research has the beauty of finding solutions of the problems, which accompanied the technological advancements of the past. Today as the Green Revolution is fast becoming outdated and causing adverse effects on soil, environment and health the researchers are finding ways for bio-farming and zero budget farming. Now the researchers are not just thinking about growth, but also about sustainable development. Lots of works are going on green energy and renewable energy. In other areas like local governance, democracy, equality and digital currency, research is going on to improve the way world moves. The emerging technology areas like the AI, 5G technology, internet of things, big data, machine learning, nanotechnology and research on stem cells and genetic engineering have become the frontiers of new age research. Human quest for knowledge continues.

The journey of enquiry and research goes on. The date with knowledge is an unending story. Today there are many dilemmas which research fraternity is facing. Is research only an intellectual gymnastics or should it always be to understand better and serve both economic and social purposes. Knowledge brought out by research is valuable only if makes the world better than we inherited. It must be remembered that research should not be seen only as a competition for superiority, but a journey for excellence.

If it is so, we must honour our past thinkers and philosophers who equipped us with more and more refined methods of research. The statement of Newton in this regard is eye opening, "If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants" it is an obeisance to the past researchers. Whatever we have known, we have known from the shoulders of others. This humility is an important thing to note for all researchers. In fact as Confucius set education (and research) is a gradual recognition of our ignorance. The journey, therefore, is infinite and never ending.

Geeta Iyengar rightly puts it, "Knowledge has a beginning but no end." It is a blind pursuit indeed. We should, nevertheless, continue this blind date with knowledge because it takes us to light from darkness and from untruth to truth as articulated in Indian prayer to goddess of knowledge Saraswati: *Tamaso ma jyotirgamaya; Asato ma sadgamaya.*

### 3. History repeats itself, first as a tragedy, second as a farce.

**"Those who don't know history are doomed to repeat it." — Edmund Burke**

History is about our past. It is about where did we come from, how did we live, how did we think what did we do and how did we evolve. History is a knowledge about the past events and processes. History is a teacher. History helps us to know about people and culture in the past. However it is not just chronological ordering of events, but an analysis of why things happened the way they happened and what were the implications. History is lingering memories from the past that shape both our present and future. History is not a record about winners of the past, but also about the losers. History is about evolution of social processes. History is the past record of our glory, pride and failings. It is our anchor when move forward in the dark, dreary and uncertain world. It is our light. It is very important to know. George Orwell has rightly said, "The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history."

Marx wrote that 'History repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as farce.' This is because we often ignore history as somebody else's past, which has no relevance to our present living. However, history is our root and whatever our ancestors did and the way they did continues to affect our present and future. The successes and failures of our ancestors offer us lessons if we pay a heed. The effects of their good or bad acts have a lingering effect in our lives. The errors and mistakes of our ancestors may help us in our future plans to avoid failures, mishaps, accidents and disasters.

It is also a fact that human instincts have remained intact since times immemorial such as greed, self interest, a desire for superiority, hegemony and dominance, longing for the best and beautiful and possessing and controlling more and more of it so on and so forth. All these instincts led to both conflict and cooperation from generations to generations. Every event of history has some lesson and when we ignore it we pay a cost for it. We may fall in the same traps which our ancestors fell. We may commit the same mistakes. Or we can learn from the past for avoiding the repetitions.

Human beings have a feeble memory and they are in the habit of forgetting even the worst. May be some good memories are relieved by them but they neither remember nor learn from the nightmares of past. History therefore repeats. Without it we cannot know truly who we are. In fact once we are well informed and aware about human instincts and weakness, we won't repeat the historical mistakes. But we disregard history. What could be the better example than the Second World War that followed the First World War in a period of just three decades? The same instincts, same objectives, same mistakes! There are umpteen instances of history repeating itself. Authoritarianism does no good to countries and citizens, it has never done. Yet we could see how countries after countries are falling into authoritarian regimes from Syria to Central Asian countries. Bloody civil wars never help in resolving the problems but even if it is known we can see how Africa and West Asian countries fall prey to it frequently. History repeats itself. Indeed as a tragedy first. Maybe history wouldn't have to repeat itself if we listened once in a while. We presume to have learned, but do we? George Bernard Shaw wonder, "If history repeats itself, and the unexpected always happens, how incapable must Man be of learning from experience."

Some memories of the past have an ever lasting imprint on the minds of those who suffered. The memory of partition of India or anti Semitism in Europe and excesses against the Jews left indelible mark on the minds of those who suffered from these bitter events. These things shape the perceptions of future generations. Palestine issue is one such memory that lingers on – the sense of loss of motherland and injustice thrust upon! It is better to come out of bitter memories of lessons and move forward. But this rarely happens. Even in case of India, bitter memories of partition linger on both side of the fences and the two countries have failed to look forward to a healthier and productive relationship.

The human society is mired in hypocrisy so much so that there is no link between what they think, what they say and what they do. In history there are umpteen examples of failed promises and commitments and gaps in truth and reality. Everybody always pretended to be fair, just and kind. Yet self interest and national interest blinded them in past so much so that they could not avoid bloody wars. Societies remained unequal in which some people became masters and the others slaves. These social processes continue to create masters and slaves, wealthy and poor people, but we have hardly learnt anything. History has many failings, which make it farcical. For example it creates an extra ordinary aura around a few heroes and leaders while pays scant attention to people at large. James Fenimore Cooper aptly remarks, "History, like love, is so apt to surround her heroes with an atmosphere of imaginary brightness."

It appears to be farcical when we claim that the modern world likes to pursue the goal of sustainable development for prosperity and peace because history has taught us that over exploitation of natural resources and use of fossil fuels is posing a threat to our mother

earth. We see how countries show their indifference to reducing carbon footprints, adoption and transfer of green technology and contributing in climatic fund notwithstanding visible change in climate and increase frequency of natural disasters. Although every climatic convention promises some step forward, the eventual outcomes do not change so much.

Looking inside our country which was integrated by the great efforts of the first Prime Minister of our country Pd. Jawaharlal Nehru and Home Minister Ballabh Bhai Patel, is now facing regionalism as a widespread phenomenon threatening the unity and integrity of the country. What did we learn from history? The founding fathers of the Indian constitution would have never imagined an emergency in 1975, when fundamental rights of the people of the country were trampled by an authoritarian regime. Today anybody can see the pathetic state of freedom of speech and human rights of the weaker sections and minorities in the country. Is there any reason to believe that we have learnt from history? History indeed repeats first as a tragedy and later as a farce.

We know from history that as growth takes place, inequality increases. We know that if development takes place, destitution also happens. As these consequences of growth and development persist and become widespread we code to to be indifferent and look away. That is both. History is being repeated first, as tragedy, and second, as farce. The present era is an era of crisis and lack of faith as much as the past era was because we ignore history. Is it because we're having so much fun at home we've forgotten the world? Is it because we're so rich and the rest of the world's so poor and we just don't care if they are? I've heard rumors; the world is starving, but we're well fed. Is it true, the world works hard and we play? Is that why we're hated so much? I've heard the rumors about hate too, once in a long while, over the years. Do you know why? I don't, that's sure! Maybe the books can get us half out of the cave. They just might stop us from making the same damn insane mistakes!"

#### 4. **There are better practices to “best practice.”**

**Take chances, make mistakes. That's how you grow. Pain nourishes your courage. You have to fail in order to practice being brave.**  
— Mary Tyler Moor

Perfection and excellence are never ending endeavours. Best practices are needed for it. Even if the best practices are known to all, the zeal and passion to implement those practices in real life differs. And best practices evolve overtime by learning and growing. Every invention and preferred way of doing things may appear to be best for its time and place, but the possibility of improvement is always there. It is for the simple fact that time is not static and so the challenges and priorities change. So do our resources and constraints. So there are better practices to the best practices.

Firstly, if after lots of brainstorming and experiments as well as testing certain “best practices” are devised and standardised in management of business, governance, education and other areas like healthcare, these practices would remain the best always is not a rational way of thinking. Since the variables and assumption go on changing in the dynamic world, nothing is permanent than change itself.

Secondly, even if the best practices are known everybody is not equally determined and efficient to adopt and implement those best practices. We have many known best practices regarding management, education, health. and hygiene and good economic policies and governance. But there is a marked difference in the abilities of countries, leaders and citizens to adopt and implement those practices.

Parents rear their children with an aim to teach them good values and manners. Throughout our school and university days we are imparted about good values and practices. But very few are able to bring these things to real lives. Japanese way of management offers many good practices. It is generally known by everybody, but very few are able to emulate and practice it. No doubt there are better practices to "best practices."

Some people had a very strong resolve to resort to the best practices despite its rigours and difficulties. Some are happy to pursue the best practices for the name sake with a lackadaisical manner. That makes a difference in results and outcomes. There are better practices to "best practices" depending on how seriously and honestly the best practices are implemented and pursued.

The big brands are created due to their best practices regarding design, quality, technology and services. Better implementation of best practices makes a difference to individuals as well as nations. Tatas in India are known for best practices due to their corporate ethics and people oriented approach. Nordic countries put lots of thrust on human development and social security. The Nordic countries remain ahead in human development in the world ahead of even the western as well as the rich countries in the Middle East. These countries put more thrust on living a good life with ensuring reasonably high standard of living, education and health to all the citizens. The US and European countries have put lot of thrust on democracy, good governance and liberty and freedom. They have established themselves as "dreamlands" or "land of opportunities" not because they know better, but they do better.

Better practice to good practices have helped the individuals to right great stories- stories from rags to riches, from modest and poor living to great works and achievements and from non- assuming individuals to great leaders and role models for generations to come.

A resource less country like Japan became one of the most industrialized country even after facing destruction in two world wars because of better practices to good practices. Its education, research and development are its power, its work ethos is its power, its management and optimisation techniques are its power. Notwithstanding the fact that all these are well documented and well known, other countries are not able to better practice the best practices.

Individuals have different results from their efforts because of difference in sincerity and honesty, dedication and determination to best practices. People like Abraham Lincoln, APJ Abdul Kalam and Nelson Mandela are some examples of self actualization and better practices to best practices. Others, who know the best practices, but do not imbibe and implement these practices in real life are destined to remain behind.

As the saying goes, intelligent people do not do different things but they do things differently. In the ultimate reckoning it is not sufficient to just know the best practices but better practice of it. This depends on discipline, dedication and determination. This requires a strong will and endurance. Better practice to best practices requires faith and self confidence. It also requires team work and responsible people around.

No doubt there is better practice to "best practices." But this requires us to come out of cocoon and comfort zone. This requires collective efforts, zeal and support. Why then people fall prey to greed, corruption, comfort and shortsightedness? It is there is no short cuts to best practices and more so excellence and better practices in any domain are not possible without rigour and practice. Vince Lombardi rightly points out, "Practice does not make perfect. Only perfect practice makes perfect."

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