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The THINK Club

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Human Behavior
Nature vs. Nurture

War and

Is peace in the
Middle East
Possible?

Peace

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Letters

Thinking Wildly

Zoo: An excellent place to study the habits of human beings.

– Evan Esar

Some people have a way with words, other people...Um...Oh...Uh, not have way.

– Steve Martin

Russian Proverb: “We are not wealthy enough to buy cheap things.”

(They don't last, and then you have to buy another.)

German Proverb: “Quality is remembered long after price is forgotten.”

Thinking hurts. However, stupidities come to the world without birth pains.

– Bielaszewski

Happiness is not achieved by the conscious pursuit of happiness; it is generally the by-product of other activities.

– Aldous Huxley

The smaller the mind the greater the conceit.

– Aesop

Everybody hates me because I'm so universally liked.

– Peter de Vries

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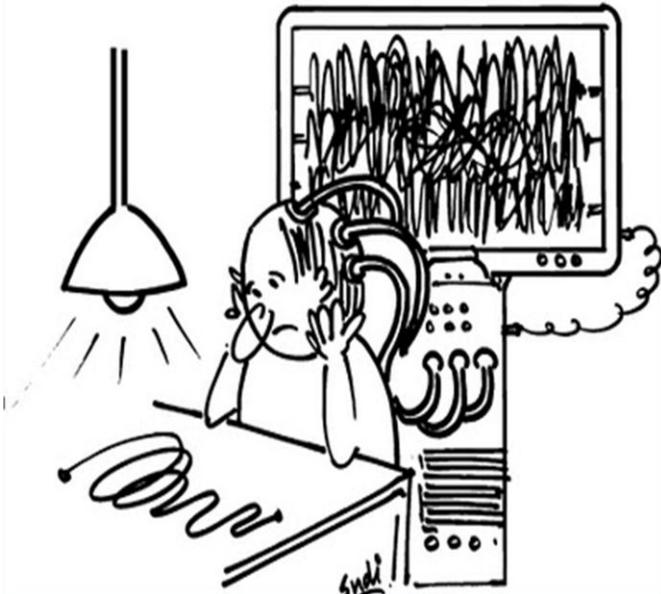
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Surrogate Thinking



Human Behavior – Nature and Nurture

By Anil Shrivastava ‘Musafir’

Why did the Egyptian men gang rape Lara Logan (she called it ‘raped by hand’) during the spring uprising of 2011 while the Japanese acted so civil in the face of a triple disaster (tsunami, earthquake and nuclear radiation) during the same period? Which one of these two situations represents true human nature?

I have been trying to understand the reasons for differences between Japanese serenity and Arab aggression. In hearing and watching news reports during the tragic events in Japan and the uprising in the Arab world, I couldn’t help but notice how both groups responded to disaster. The Japanese refrain from displaying emotions publicly. In Arab cultures they outwardly express rage as an expression of loyalty to their groups.

As far as I understand both Japanese and Arabs mistreat women as second-class citizens, but there is a difference. In Japan, women make financial decisions at home and are free to get higher education, whereas, Arab women are beaten, stoned, honor murdered or publicly humiliated if they deviate from the norm. I am not sure if it is due to human nature or economic prosperity. In the Arab world, wealth remains in the hands of just a few while the masses are poor.

Japan is always at the forefront whenever help is needed in any part of the world. While Japan was hit by an 8.9 earthquake, its own rescuers were helping New Zealand cope with their earthquake. In the Arab world, Japan has served as a leading donor to the Palestinians via UNWRA, and has also provided assistance to the Palestinian Authority, Lebanon, Jordan and Yemen – to name a few. In contrast the Arab world did not do anything worth mentioning for the recent disaster in Japan.



The Japanese do not hesitate in criticizing themselves and correcting their own mistakes. The Japanese do not burn churches and synagogues nor do they kill Christians and Jews. They do not need to prove their existence by constantly being in conflict with others. This is in contrast to the Arabs who are still in search of a more stable and satisfying sense of identity.

Human nature is an evolution. It is a mixture of nature and nurture. By nature all adhere to the survival of the fittest. When our basic needs are satisfied we display peace and compassion which is a product of nurture. The Arabs have been deprived of individual freedom and prosperity for thousands of years. They have always lived under tyrants. The spring revolution has failed everywhere except in Egypt and Tunisia. In Egypt and Tunisia the rulers were deposed because the military wanted it so. In other parts the military supports the tyrants. In reality they are still under the thumbs of the tyrants.

Human behavior is a product both of our innate human nature and of our individual experience and environment. Our civil behavior is a product of our environment and socialization. The animal behavior in us is innate. Evolutionary psychologists see human nature as ‘a collection of psychological adaptations that often operate beneath conscious thinking to solve problems of survival and reproduction by predisposing us to think or feel in certain ways’ (Nancy Kobrin, PhD, Joan Lachkar, PhD in Psychology Today, March 25, 2011)

Both Japan and the Arab world have demonstrated true human nature. The former is attributed to nurture (evolutionary) and latter is attributed to nature (innate). That is what I think.

Potential Uniting Motionless Public (PUMP)

By Umesh Rashmi Rohatgi

(Please don't read this article if you are happy with the present Indian condition or system, because if we go on doing what we are doing we will get the results that we are getting, hence we have to think beyond the box in order to reap additional benefits, as thoughts are mother of all results.)

The chances are remote and practically impossible, but without this we cannot achieve much progress in India.

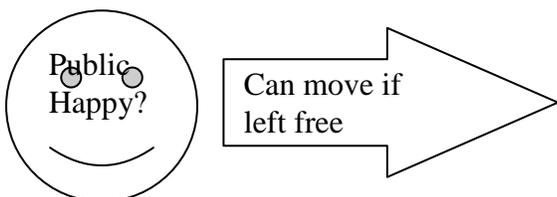
Everyone must have heard the story of Akbar who had a minister named Birbal who asked him one day, "can you make the line I had drawn in the sand smaller on the condition that you will not touch the line." Birbal who was a smart man, said after thinking for few minutes yes sir it is possible. And coolly drew a bigger line next to the original line. In the present situation we have to ask these questions, "**Are people in India working to keep this system running? Is this system serving the public? In order to do just that to the system, we the people have to be stronger than the system then and only then will this system will work for us. System cost effectiveness is necessary and we should perform Value Analysis on it. Do we still need the departments of rationing and the refugees (only to mention a few) we even have a food surplus 58 years after the division of India. We have done enough pumping for the system and now it is time to pump the public for a change as well for progress (balloons can be pumped easily).**

We all know that circular objects can be brought set in motion and will move smoothly as well. But if we try to move a triangle it will be more difficult and a square will be most difficult. If you don't believe this, see the Pyramids of Egypt, they have gone nowhere in last few thousand years as they are both triangle and square.

I am going to use these three basic shapes to explain the present conditions and problems of our India. Our population which can be represented with the circle as we can draw a similarity from our national Flag; it has a wheel with 24 spokes. That is different than our IAS (mind) & Ministers (heads) had made 30 states (old formula of divide and rule). Triangle represents nexus of three P, Politicians, Police and Public servant. Problem represented by Square.

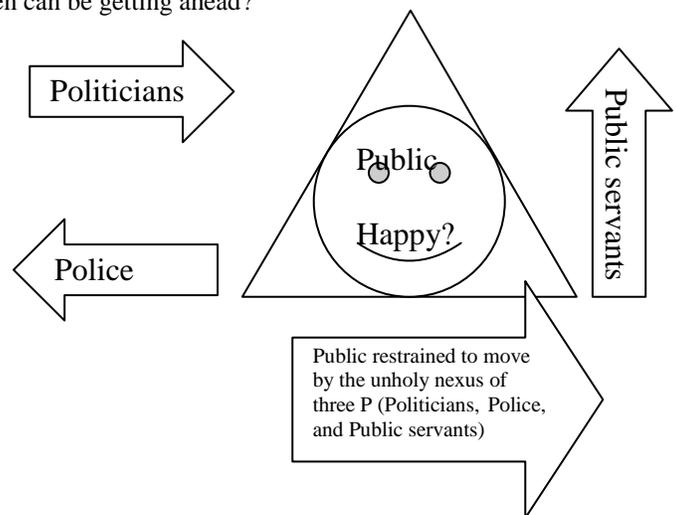
Motion is progress

Stagnation sucks



It is as simple as it can be, are we here to invest in the system or in the public? Choose the Public. Even a Public servant is a bonded slave of system and we are not against all of them.

Obviously we are investing in the establishment, and the system does not want the public to be in control over their affairs or let the public be in control of gaining enough momentum to take over the system. So we can see the Chakra of our flag that we as the public of India are divided in many ways by cast, creed and statehood based on languages in the name of keeping the language alive. This could not be far from the truth. As we are not united we cannot take control of our destiny but these petty politicians for their narrow mindset and interest will ruin our beautiful India and us (as if they have not done yet during last 58 years). Three sides clutch the population of India, representing the three big clamps, unluckily all three parts of this unholy nexus, all start with P; Politicians, Police and Public servants. Now you see the new picture as it emerges as a big triangle, which contains and covers all the public in its clutches. The public has to remember here that only a few hundred British ruled us for hundreds of years, with the help of this rotten system. We are helping to perpetuate this system if we don't try to change it, then can be getting ahead?



Public is squeezed from three directions (clutches)

As we can see these three components are not tuned to public directions.

* **Middle Stage of pumping the public**

Continued on Page14

What's in a Nickname?

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

Beautiful names are ruined by absurd nicknames which should be a sin and a shame in my opinion. Good names are shortened into meaningless feeble monosyllables. Some nicknames are so stupid that they make me trip over a cordless phone.

Consider a man being called 'Abby.' Yes, that's what everyone called him. One day I asked him, "How come everyone calls you Abby?"

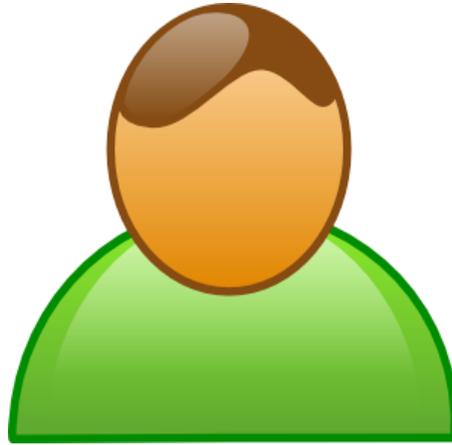
"Well, that's my nickname," Abby replied.

"But don't you realize that is a woman's name?" I asked.

"Well, there is a long story behind that." Abby continued, "Actually my real name is Norman, but my parents called me 'Norm.' My friends in school changed that to 'Normal.' I got so frustrated by that name that I started acting funny. One day I was caught drowning a goldfish in water. My friends started calling me 'Abnormal' instead of 'Normal.' Later in life 'Abnormal' was shortened to 'Abby.'"

Nicknames can be cruel I thought. I am sure that Newt Gingrich wouldn't like to be called 'Nuts.' That would be as insulting as calling Donald Trump 'Dump.'

Nicknames can be very misleading too. After finishing my schooling I went to Calcutta (now Kolkata) for a job interview. It is customary there to be a freeloader to save a few bucks. So I stayed with a friend's distant relative. Calcutta is so crowded that people working in different shifts rent the same bed at different times (asynchronously). My host had a big family. They all lived wall to wall in a 500 square-foot area. My host asked me if I would like to share the bed with baby. I complied. The



next morning when I woke up, I found a nineteen year girl sleeping by my side.

"Where is the baby?" I asked.

"I am Baby," she replied sweetly, "that's my nickname."

Nicknames sometimes can come back to hit one like a boomerang. I knew a gentleman named Raj who immigrated to the U.S. in the last millennium. He officially changed his name to Rogers to sound more like a

mainstream American. His honeymoon with his newly acquired name lasted only a few hours as everyone started calling him Raj for short. He was back to square one. He got back to where he started from.

Nicknames can be like an iceberg. There's more to it than meets the eye or ear. This reminds me of Crazy. On my first day on the job I was asked to contact Crazy, the SME (subject matter expert). Crazy was very nice to me. He talked to me for over an hour. I noticed something peculiar about Crazy. He had a heavy South Indian accent. People in South India are usually not named Crazy. Out of curiosity I asked him, "You sound like a South Indian. How come your name is Crazy?"

"You are so right," replied Anthony, "that is my nickname. My real name is Chinthasway Ramanarayanan Ananthalingam Zhankaarswarupa Yadunandanam. Crazy is the abbreviation of my full name.

Shakespeare wrote, "What's in a name?" I disagree – names matter. I have friends with absurd nicknames, and some who have given their children absurd nicknames. Our goal should be to help our children have a happy adulthood. By giving ridiculous nicknames we will expose them to lifelong ridicule. No one will take them seriously. Think about it!

Our Freeloader Society

By Robert Bickmeyer

I am not a capitalist and never owned a business. I was a worker for 40 years who was satisfied with a fair wage for my efforts and, thus, am nauseated with the laziness and conniving greed in our freeloader society. There are many who are hardworking, ambitious and proudly earn their living, but in the narrow sphere of my life I've seen a few schemers who circumvented working or who greedily seek an exorbitant wage.

Michigan governor Rick Snyder and the state legislature recently reduced jobless benefits from 26 weeks to 20 weeks. An Oakland Press editorial called it a mixed blessing. This is a hardship for those feverishly trying to find a job, but a deserved slap for those who are abusing the system. I know a family man whose job was being relocated out of state, but refused to relocate, taking a nice separation allowance and unemployment. I sneered at his decision as I had been among about 200 workers who relocated from New York to Detroit because that was where our job was. This family man ignored his wife's nagging to look for a job as he lived comfortably on his severance pay and unemployment benefits, promising to seek employment when his freeloading (my word, not his) ended. Even if he worked for the minimum wage of \$7.40 per hour a 40 hour work week would net him \$296, only \$66 less than the maximum jobless benefit of \$362 a week. There is always, of course, the possibility of earning a promotion and/or wage increase by the time your benefits run out – and you would have a job!

Another freeloader was the young unwed mother of two who was given a nice apartment and steady income by we taxpayers. What no social worker uncovered was the fact that the father of her two children had a job and also lived in the apartment.



I once watched the Oprah Winfrey Show when a young mother unabashedly told all, “When I was a teenager I got tired of my parents criticizing me so when I turned 18 I had a baby so I could get my own place.”

I am reminded of the true story in my local newspaper. The employees of a large manufacturing plant were on strike, demanding a profit sharing plan. The infuriated owner of the plant said, “I started this business 30 years ago, working 12 hours a day 7 days a week. My investment of time, hard work and money enabled my business to flourish. Now my workers, all of whom are paid a fair wage with benefits and are replaceable, demand a share of my profits. I am going to close the plant and retire.” Their greed put them among the unemployed.

Where are the investigators? This rampant abuse of society's compassion must be curtailed. The costs of hiring and training investigators will be more than compensated by the reduction of abuse.

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Book Review

Living Buddha Living Christ

By Thich Hanh

Berkley Publishing Group 1995 (Paperback)

In this short and effectual book, Thich Nhat Hanh draws substantial parallels between two completely different religions from different spheres. He emphasizes that one should look at the similarities rather than the differences between the two. This is an appeal for inter-faith cooperation and communication. True religion does not promote adversity. At one point he states "It is not only true that Christians need Jesus, but Jesus needs Christians also for His energy to continue in this world" (p.73).

The book talks about aliveness that is dynamic in the practice of one's' faith. It is about bringing the presence of our minds, hearts, Holy Spirit, or however one chooses to frame it, directly into a practice such as a prayer or meditation. Hanh states this from a spiritual standpoint, not an intellectual one. He states it within a context of a mystic, not orthodox. He has opened his mind to creating a dialogue between two religions which seem to be at odds with each other, to effectively create peace, love, compassion, and harmony in the world. I believe this is what both Buddha and Jesus came here to teach.

I like the author's approach of inclusiveness, but don't agree with all of his conclusions. At times he seems overzealous in trying to show how both religions pose a poetic beauty, but never really goes over any real evidence for the idea that these religions are compatible. Overall, this is an excellent book.

Awareness – The Perils and Opportunities of Reality

By Anthony De Mello

Doubleday 1992 (Paperback)

This book was a real eye-opener for me. Right when I thought I understood the basics of living and loving life, the book made me aware of the fact that my pain and sufferings were due largely to my own inability to see the truth or the root cause.

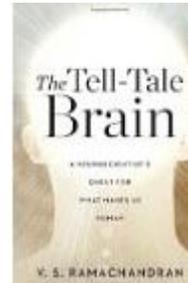
This book came at a crucial time in my life when I had to deal with sundry life changing issues at the same time. DeMello uses common stories and

relates them very effectively to the topics at hand. He speaks in a language we all can understand. Besides the stories this book forces you to think while learning the art of living.

The Tell-Tale Brain: A Neuroscientist's Quest for What Makes Us Human

By V.S. Ramachandran

Norton 2011 (Hardcover)



The author takes us on a guided tour of the inner workings of the brain. This is a fascinating journey. The vast landscape that is the human mind is thought to reside within the confines of the physical brain.

Current thinking is that the thinking that brain does emerges from many specialized parts of the brain that are responsible for specific functions. To some degree, there is plasticity in the brain so that an area of the brain responsible for one function can do another function in the event of an injury.

There are many, many topics covered. One that I found particularly fascinating was mirror neurons in the brain. For example, when you pick up a glass these neurons fire in a certain pattern. When you watch someone else pick up a glass, the neurons fire in the same pattern. These neurons are the basis for empathy, the ability to put ourselves in the position of others. These neurons allowed humans to develop language by enabling one person to imitate the utterances of another. Moreover, autism is thought to arise from a deficiency of these mirror neurons.

Ramachandran talks about phantom limbs where the brain cells responsible for a body part continue to function even after the part is lost. And writes of a patient who starts creating hauntingly beautiful paintings after a part of his brain is damaged, as if the hidden talent is unleashed once another inhibitory part of the brain is lost.

This is a fun ride, although it does seem a bit long in some parts. If you are interested in the rapidly advancing field of neuroscience and what it means for our understanding of the human brain, this book is for you.

Essay

The Amazing Land of the Rising Sun

(Reprinted from 2006)

By Rishi Shrivastava

I often find myself puzzled when I hear a or inferior to another. Stereotyping is because it limits our ability to judge essentially a tool to reduce our incentive conveniently lump people into categories. propagandists to brainwash people into conservatives will carelessly claim that destruction of religion and family values. paint conservatives as war-mongering disenfranchise the poor and resurrect Jim Crow laws.



certain group of people labeled superior usually not a constructive exercise people by their true merits. It is to think because it allows us to Stereotyping is often used by following a specific agenda. For example, all liberals are committed to the It is equally ridiculous when liberals prudes who share a desire to

However, sometimes stereotypes are directionally accurate and can be incredibly valuable. I think that one of the main reasons people enjoy traveling is that they form general opinions about other cultures that shape their impressions of their own countries and ways of life. I had this type of experience earlier this year in Japan. I would like to take this opportunity to share my observations about the country and its people. Some concepts will make you think hard while other observations will make you hardly think at all. In fact, you might actually lose IQ points in the same way you would if you read a tabloid publication such as *The National Enquirer*, or these days, *The New York Times*.

The Japanese appreciate American cultural icons: Kyoto was once the Japanese capital. It is culturally rich with beautiful Buddhist Temples and Shinto shrines. However, as my friends and I were walking there from a traditional Japanese dance performance, we ran across Kento's, a bar that specializes in 1950s and 1960s American music. Coming from Motown myself I could not resist checking out the place. At the club they sang old American songs and the room was a flashback to an old episode of American Bandstand with people dancing vigorously to these tunes. The live band belted out songs by the Supremes in perfect English. However, afterward when we tried talking to them the singers confessed that they could not speak English well at all. Essentially they had memorized the lyrics and pronunciations to all of the songs. But, they were eager to learn new English words from us and asked many questions about the American musical scene.

I think that Americans should take a step back and realize what an influence we have had on pop culture. We really don't give ourselves enough credit. Although we have infested the world with our share of questionable "talents" such as Britney Spears and Michael Moore, how many other countries have produced the likes of Elvis Presley? Last week I was watching TV and saw Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi sing Elvis tunes from Graceland with President Bush. Please join me in donating to his re-election campaign so that he does not lose his day job. Seriously though, I could not think of a better way for him to pay his respects to our country.

The Japanese are friendly to Americans: Friendliness to Americans is noteworthy because Japan is among the most ethnically homogeneous countries. In fact, according to the CIA website www.cia.gov 99% of Japan is ethnically Japanese. I thought that I would be shunned by the masses, but had a very satisfying experience which started in Osaka. As I left the taxi to walk into my hotel room I realized that I had left my luggage in the trunk. I immediately called my Japanese friend Makiko who was leading our trip and she found my dilemma to be rather amusing. In fact, she was not at all concerned that I did not know the name of the cab company, the cab driver's name, or anything else that would help me retrieve my luggage. Makiko called a few cab companies in Osaka (there were only a handful) and they brought my luggage back to the hotel after only a couple of hours without any missing items.

When I would meander aimlessly through the subways with my travel book random people would approach me to ask if there was anything they could do to help. One man ran all around the subway with me to answer all of my questions until he was sure that I would reach my destination safely. The Japanese will treat you politely, even if they are annoyed with you.

Although the Japanese are polite to foreigners, they expect the same in return. I was at a business event in **Continued on Page**

Facts about the Debt Ceiling

The debt ceiling debate has put our nation at a standstill. Politicians are worried about their constituent's reaction who, on one hand, may not like a greater national debt and on the other may adversely react to a reduction in social programs. For them it is 'heads you win; tails I lose' situation. However, behind this debate are some underlying factors that we should be aware of.

How many times has the ceiling been raised? Since March 1962, the debt ceiling has been raised 74 times, according to the Congressional Research Service. Ten of those times have occurred since 2001.

What would have happened if Congress hadn't raised the debt ceiling by Aug 2? No one knows for sure. But the going assumption is that no good can come of it.

What happens if Congress blows the debt ceiling? The treasury would not have authority to borrow any more money. And that would be a problem since the government borrows to make up the difference between what it spends and what it takes in. It uses that borrowed money to help fund operations and pay creditors.

Geithner's critics say he could prevent default by simply paying the interest due to bondholders. But since average spending – minus interest – outpaces revenue by about \$118 billion a month, Geithner won't be able to pay all the country's bills.

That means he will have to pick and choose who to pay and who to put off every day. And there's no guarantee that paying interest while shirking other legal obligations will protect the country from the perception of default.

Geithner said it would be akin to a homeowner who pays his mortgage but puts off his car loan, credit cards, insurance premiums and utilities. The mortgage is taken care of, but the homeowner's credit could still be damaged.

Ultimately, if lawmakers fail to raise the debt ceiling, they will have two choices, both awful.

They could either cut spending or raise taxes by several hundred billion dollars just to get through Sept. 30, which is the end of the fiscal year. Or they could acknowledge that the country would be unable to pay what it owes in full and the United States could effectively default on some of its obligations.

The first option would be impossible to execute without serious economic repercussions and the second option could cripple the economy and send world markets into a tailspin.

Will reaching the debt ceiling cause a government shutdown? Not technically.

A government shutdown occurs if lawmakers fail to appropriate money for federal agencies and programs. By contrast, if the debt ceiling is breached, Uncle Sam would still have revenue coming in that could be used to fund the government. However, if Geithner is coming up short by \$118 billion every month, and lawmakers just decide to cut spending by that amount, that could effectively mean a partial government shutdown.

In any case, the US is in a bind and all of us will have to sacrifice by lowering our standard of living. Long live America!



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Don't Give Up on Middle East Peace

By Bala Prasad

Peace in the Middle East remains one of the most elusive and controversial issues. Little has been achieved in 60 years of conflict. But that does not mean peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved in our lifetime. It can.

Israeli President Shimon Peres believes that peace in the Middle East can be achieved in our lifetime. He cites, as an example of this possibility, the events of the Six Day War in 1967 that engendered the reunification of Jerusalem and the breaking down of the divisions that once wracked the holy city by offering freedom to all faiths and creeds in Jerusalem.

President Peres believes that this reunited city is evidence that there will be peace in our lifetime. Ironically, the reunification of Jerusalem that has brought about great results for the Jewish people has, at the same time, made Jerusalem the center of controversy among Muslims as well as the leaders of the free world. As world leaders travel the road to peace in the Middle East, Jerusalem is always a major topic on their quest for peace. The continuing question of who should control Jerusalem politically is at the top of any agenda in the peace process.

But if other historical powder kegs have been able to achieve peace, then so too can the Middle East. For example, after the war in 1967, Egypt decided that it was useless to keep fighting with Israel and instead decided to make peace. Both countries entered a peace deal of their own accord; they did not need any other country to broker peace between them. Israel returned the Sinai Peninsula and Golan heights in return for peace. Not only did they achieve peace but they also entered a phase where they could conduct bilateral relations. The deal turned out to be good for both countries.

Jordan and Israel also managed to achieve peace with each other. It took the political will of the leaders of Egypt, Jordan and Israel to come together to the negotiating table, discuss what they wanted, and get themselves a deal to stop unnecessary fighting and begin co-existing peacefully.

Even after Palestine debuts as a self-governing country, peace in the Middle East will not be attained. But the Israeli and Palestinian relationship will then be on its way to gradual improvement. And that is how peace will be achieved, one tiny step at a time. If it can happen in other countries, it can happen in the Middle East as well.

Peace Is Unattainable

By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

Let's face facts. The Israelis want all of Palestine and the Palestinians want all of Israel. There is no pretense of objectivity on either side and it doesn't seem likely that they will be able to completely separate the rational from the irrational

Many solutions have been proposed including a two-state solution: Israel within the borders of the state as it was before the 1967 war, alongside a Palestinian state of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. However, this does not grant Palestinians a full equality of land nor does that grant them the sovereign rights due to a nation-state.

The cause of discontent runs deeper than the issue of poverty. The Palestinians will continue to struggle for a foothold in Jerusalem. The most that Palestinians can hope for is a non-contiguous and limited autonomy in Palestinian population centers on the West Bank and Gaza, surrounded on both sides by the Israeli army and fragmented by Jewish settlements. Wealthy Palestinians have already migrated to western countries and those who remain are being pushed into Lebanon and Jordan.

Palestine doesn't have a viable army to control the masses. The Arab world has an army that rules. The so-called Arab spring of 2011 fizzled out by summer from lack of army support. In Egypt, power was simply transferred from Mr. Mubarak's hands to army generals. The Palestinians cannot challenge Israeli power, they're divided into many factions and they are unable to create civil and democratic institutions. Arabs lack, aside from rhetoric, a desire for a real, empowered, and democratic state of Palestine. The Palestinians will always remain distraught, violent and oppressed. The best they can do is to be a source of cheap labor to the Israelis.

It has become obvious after sixty-plus years of fruitless discussions and violence, that the current negotiations are simply not working nor are they going to work. Any concession on from either side seems impractical and a threat to their identity and existence.

The Land of the Rising Sun

Continued from Page 8

which the CEO of a prominent Japanese financial company took time out of his day to speak to our group of Chicago MBA students. Afterward, my friend Tony and I struck up a conversation with him and we built a good rapport. The CEO told us we should feel free to contact him if we had any questions about his company. However, when it came time to exchange business cards at the end of the conversation Tony failed to go through the custom of holding the card with both hands, bowing, and admiring the credentials of the CEO. Instead, Tony shoved the card in his back pocket and said that he would be in touch. To this the CEO replied that he probably would not have time to respond to any correspondences. If you cross the line then you might hear the Japanese make a hissing sound, which is a hint that they are becoming agitated with you. This happened to me once. I deserved it though because I asked 20 questions to a hotel clerk with a long line of people behind me.

Their politeness to Americans is somewhat surprising considering the complicated history of the Japanese. After all, the Japanese government committed unspeakable atrocities such as the Nanjing Massacre of 1937-38, in which over 250,000 innocents were killed by the Japanese Army. Also, Americans will never forget the unprovoked attack on Pearl Harbor, which led to our entrance into World War II. I have always had a dislike for the Japanese government from this time in history and was curious to know how today's Japanese view it. Although I am not a historian, my observation is that today's Japanese people, especially the younger ones, take a very dim view of the Japanese leadership from that timeframe.

Hiroshima provides a case in point. Many historians argue that Japan was on the verge of surrender and that the atomic bomb was not needed to end the war. In fact, prominent scholars have suggested that Truman's decision to bomb Japan was more of a ploy to show the Soviets our military capabilities than anything else. I had an opportunity in Hiroshima to ask some questions to a victim of the first atomic bomb dropping in 1945. She replied to me that although she did not agree with America's decision to wipe out an entire city and kill innocent people, she resented just as much her government for what it did to provoke the attack. Her response surprised me, but reinforced my belief that the Japanese and Americans can get along just fine in the future.

Japan is friendly to non-Christians: Religious conflicts do not arise as often there because people are more spiritual than they are religious. While many

Japanese are Shinto or Buddhist, quite a few classify themselves as both. The great thing about Shinto is that there is not a common scripture, nor is there any right or wrong lifestyle. In that sense it is less judgmental than Christianity and some of the other great religions of the world. People practice Shinto and Buddhism through many of the Japanese customs and national rituals.

In America I believe there is too much focus on religion. As long as I can remember Americans have asked me about my beliefs in Hinduism and then have tried to convince me that if I did not change my views then I would be destined for eternal damnation. In the news I read about great conflicts between people in other countries due to religious differences. While I think that religion can play a role within the family and at the individual level, I am fed up with evangelicals and others who preach morality and "correct" ways of living your life. In Japan I just did not perceive that to be the case and felt more comfortable there for that reason.

Japan is a technological wonderland: Technology is widely embraced by virtually everyone in the big cities. According to Ipsos, in 2006 95% of Japanese households own cell phones compared to just 75% for the US. But, what is even more impressive is the range of activities used for cell phones in Japan. On cell phones I saw people surf the web, listen to music, and even shop at vending machines. They have vending machines for practically everything. I was very hungry in Tokyo and bought some chicken from a vending machine. All I had to do was pull a string and chemicals were released to warm the food. Caffeine aficionados can go anywhere they would like and get hot or cold tea and coffee from a vending machine.

Although I was impressed with all of the high-tech gadgetry in Japan, it got me thinking about the perils of such technology. Watching people with all of their gadgets in their own worlds made me feel sad that the Japanese lacked a real connection with each other. I see this in America more and more. People in the 1950s met up at the corner store and talked about what their neighbors were doing. Later people shared a common experience by watching the same three network channels and discussing the big game on Monday Night Football.

On one hand technology has increased our access to the world and expanded our choice of entertainment. The disadvantage is that people are so disaggregated and segmented that they even rely today on the Internet to find their soul mates for them. In fact, if you have ever talked to anyone who is Gen Y or younger you will find them mostly incapable of carrying on a real conversation without

Continued on Next Page

The Land of the Rising Sun Continued from Previous Page

breaking out abbreviations such as LOL (laughing out loud) and XOXO (hugs and kisses.) Many believe that our disconnection with each other has led to widespread loneliness and fueled the need for celebrity gossip. The idea is that since we do not talk to each other anymore, the only way we can share a common experience is to relay our dissatisfaction with Angelina Jolie and her latest escapades in Namibia.

On a less serious note there is a quirky technological subculture that has emerged in Japan called the "Otaku." Otaku refers to a Japanese person who is passionate about anime, technology, and video games. The term we would use in America is "Geek." I first heard of this while watching CNN a month before my Japan trip and had to observe it firsthand since the network estimated the size of the Otaku economy at about 4 billion dollars. The best place to observe Otaku culture is in Tokyo's Akihabara district. On the streets of Akihabara they sell new gadgets that won't come out in the US for at least another year.

The funniest thing about the Otaku culture is the popularity of Maid Cafes. These are everywhere in Tokyo and have become the latest fad. The experience is hard to describe, but I will try. Maid Cafes are family friendly places and are not restricted to adults. However, all of the waitresses dress up in maid outfits and many wear bunny ears that resemble those of popular comic book heroines. At some Maid Cafes they will feed the customers, offer massages, and play video games too. The Maids boost your ego by making flattering comments. I knew something was fishy when one maid raved about how exciting it must have been for me to grow up in the Detroit suburbs. This leads me to an unsettling observation of how women are expected to behave in Japan.

The Japanese culture has room for improvement: Japanese women are marginalized not only in Maid Cafes. They are encouraged to speak in high voices that are almost babyish. When I am with Japanese friends and a serious topic of conversation comes up, men do all the talking and the women just sit back and nod. In Japan the law is that women cannot inherit the royal throne from parents. Therefore, there is tremendous pressure in the Japanese Royal Family to produce a son. Much of the debate over whether to change the law to allow for female heirs occurred while I was in Japan.

The debate got me thinking about how America is also still behind in promoting women's rights. I think that it is surprising that many colleges and professional schools in America did not even admit women until the 1960s. Women must still make a very unfair choice over

whether to have children or be allowed to climb the corporate ladder. Although women make up almost half of America's labor force, according to Infoplease.com there are only two Fortune 500 companies that have women occupy the CEO or presidential ranks. Ninety companies on the list have zero women corporate officers. I find it baffling that when I listen to News Radio talk shows the question still comes up about whether America is ready for a female president. By comparison Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister of Britain 27 years ago and Golda Meir became Israel's Prime Minister even ten years before that in 1969. The real issue should be that Senator Clinton has already run the country for 8 years and that term limits should preclude her from doing it again. Her gender should not enter into the equation.

Another aspect of Japan I found troubling was the prevalence of tobacco usage. This surprised me because otherwise the Japanese are very healthy. Although I like to think that I eat cautiously in the US, I could not help but pour salt and sugar into all of the food served to me during my 15-day visit to Japan since the food there was almost too healthy. There is practically no garbage on the streets of Tokyo and the other big cities. Japan is really a haven for anyone who obsesses about hygiene and health as I do. Life expectancies are higher than just about any other country in the world. Despite all that, cigarette vending machines are prevalent and people smoke freely everywhere that you go. Perhaps they just haven't gotten the memo that tobacco is harmful to your health.

Other Observations

- Crime is very low. I walked at all times with a guidebook in front of me and did not feel unsafe even once.
- Sumo is a Japanese institution. In Japan these 600-pound celebrities enjoy supermodel girlfriends and an ardent following of fans.
- Sake, Japanese rice wine, is very smooth and tasty. But, it has higher alcohol content than regular wine. I think lukewarm sake is better than cold or hot because the taste is strongest at that temperature.
- Shiatsu massage is a little painful, but helps even complicated ailments. Public baths at hot springs are incredibly therapeutic as well because the water contains healing minerals that invigorated my spirit.



Lifestyle

Poison-Proofing Your Home – Niru Prasad, MD



T+ - Très toxique

It is true that poisoning can happen in any home and the incidence of poisoning during childhood is very high especially from the ages of 1 to 3 usually because of childhood curiosities.

First Aid for Poisoning For swallowed poisons

If your child is unconscious or having seizures or any other

abnormal symptoms.

1. Protect the airway.
2. Transport the child to nearest medical facility.
3. Bring containers of the poison swallowed.
4. If vomiting occurs, bring the vomitus.
5. Bring a basin in the car to catch the vomitus material.

While calling the Poison Control, please have this information ready

1. Age and weight of the child.
2. Name and Product label.
3. Time the poisoning occurred.
4. Symptoms.
5. Your name and telephone number.

If the child is conscious and crying

1. Separate the child from poison.
2. **INDUCE** vomiting by gagging the back of the throat or giving them syrup of Ipecac, one tablespoon followed by a glass of water (for ages 1 to 10 years of age). **DO NOT** give Ipecac to a child less than 12 months of age. For ages 10 and older give two tablespoons Ipecac followed by two glasses of water.

For Skin Contact

Remove the contaminated clothing and flush skin thoroughly with water.

For Eye Contact

Rinse both eyes thoroughly with warm water 5-10 minutes and if contact lens is worn – remove them immediately.

Poisonous Gases

Open all the windows and doors for fresh air. Protect the airway and transport the child to medical facility.

A checklist of poisonous products found in home

Kitchen Area: Household detergents, Drano, Lye, cleansers and Ammonia, oven cleaners, carpet and upholstery cleaners, Tylenol, Aspirin and other pills.

Bedroom: Cosmetics, perfumes, jewelry cleaners, sleeping or birth control pills.

Laundry Room: Bleach, soap and detergents, spot removers. Closets, Attic, Storage Places: Moth Balls and spray, rat poison.

Bathroom: Tylenol, Aspirin, vitamins and iron pills, shampoo, hand lotions, creams, nail polish remover, toilet bowl cleaners, boric acid or room deodorizers.

Garage and Basement: Lye, Kerosene, bug killers, gasoline, paint thinner, weed killers, antifreeze.

Purses: All drugs including birth control pills, heart medications, headache pills, etc.

POISON PREVENTION TIPS

1. Lock up all medicines; use child resistant packaging.
2. **DON'T** call medicine candy.
3. **DON'T** take medicine in front of children.
4. Dispose of old medicines regularly and flush them through drain.
5. Avoid bringing unnecessary poisonous substances into to your home.
6. Store cleaning supplies out of sight and out of reach of children.
7. Keep all products in their original containers.
8. **DON'T** store pesticides or detergents near food.
9. Always rinse out the containers before throwing them in garbage.
10. Keep a bottle of syrup of Ipecac in your home. However, **DO NOT** use it unless checked with Poison Control.

DO NOT INDUCE VOMITING IF

- a. The swallowed poison is a corrosive such as Drano, Lye or acid.
 - b. If the child has swallowed Kerosene, gasoline or petroleum distillates.
 - c. If the child is drowsy, sleepy or having seizures.
11. Know your local Police, Fire Department and Poison Control telephone number.

Protect your child against Poisoning from plants.

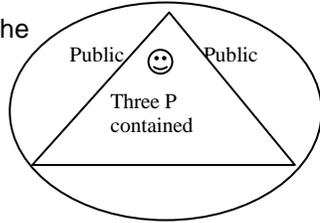
Household plants are amount the most frequent objects ingested by toddlers and young children. Protect your children against plant exposure. Know the names of all your household plants and the plants and flowers growing in your backyards. Some of the common non-toxic plants are African Violet, Aralia, Asparagus, Baby's Breath, Bamboo, Cactus, Camellia, Crabapple, Daisy, Dandelion, Eucalyptus, Fig tree, Jade plant, Easter Lily, Magnolia, Petunia, Poinsettia, Rose, Spider plant, Violet, Weeping fig, and Zebra plants.

Some of the common toxic plants are Apricot Kernel, Avocado Leaf, Azalea, Betel Nut Palm, Castor Bean, Cherries, Daffodil, Dffenbachia, English Ivy, Foxglove, Poison Ivies, Lily-of-the-valley, Marijuana, Morning Glory, Mushrooms, Philodendrons, Rhododendron, Rosary Pea, Tobacco, Tulips, Water Hemlock and Yews.

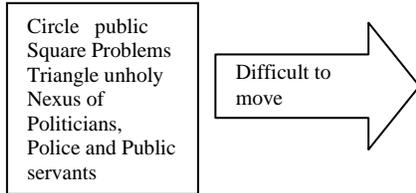
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In this stage the public has a handle over the unholy alliance of three P

The public have a cushion between them, and keep them apart then they have no choice but to serve the Public, hence a happy public.



Now we see the kind of problems we are facing in India, like the big square. We know how difficult it is to move a square. But remember the golden rule- PUMP. The problem can be solved if the circle of the Public can cover them, i.e. Public is surrounding the problems. I.e. populations have ownership and have a handle on the controls of the problems.



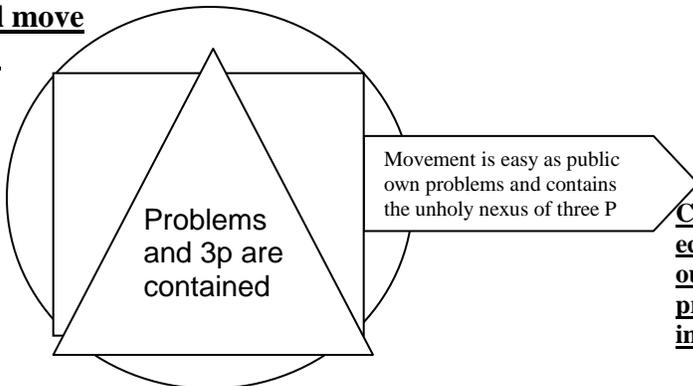
Process is not simple as it sounds.

So far the tall claims of Politicians, Police and Public servants that they can only solve all the problems Public have, so the public should sit and relax, did not work yet.

These three components of society are having fun at our expense and problems are still there and rather increasing. Hence we have to have the ownership of the problems, and then only we will have solution as per our own satisfaction as these will be under **Peoples** guidelines. So get involved.

*** Final stage of pumping**

Circle will move Smoothly.



Now we can see how we can own the problem and by pumping the confidence and will in the people, we can take our population to new heights. Think for a minute that we only with 300 of out of one

Billion people we are no. three economy in the world and with all as potential middle class our economy will have to No. One (Uno) in the world for long time to come. Our Bharat will be great as we just say it now. Once we have the momentum going nobody can stop our people, they know how to survive under the worst and best conditions. Indus civilization is only one civilization, which had survived the onslaught of time.

Now we can bring the analogy of inflated football to this final shape it may still look like the Circular in shape but it needs pumping in order to have bouncing quality. Hence remember the Mantra PUMP.

It means here the Proactive Unbroken Mentoring of People. (PUMP)

How can this be translated into pumping process into a real action plan?

Public inflation program in seven steps:

1. Capacity building and empowering of our rural masses, by explaining to them how this Government is working and how can this system work for us. We should resolve not to work for the system. Let them know that in democracy we the people are supreme and neither Politicians nor Public servants, including police is the master or rulers. So we should have a recall mechanism for Politicians and Public servants and their perks including raises we should decide by majority **Ballot. Police. Education** should be transferred to local bodies as their needs depend on local conditions these are not the same everywhere hence had to be controlled by local population. There should be provision in the constitution to raise their funds themselves, not to be provided by Central Government. All public services should be term based, not permanent. Rules to be robust and can only be changed by majority and by **Ballot** only. Least governance is the best governance. All laws, which are antique, should remain in museums only and had to be revised to reflect the pro-public and based on encouragement not as they stand now, based on mistrust and deterrent to public progress. There is no holy cow law, when it comes to public benefits and interests.

The **Public's right to know everything should be the norm, Freedom of Information Act.**

Corruption and black money is about 50% of the total economy and unemployment is only 30% you figure out the relationship how easily we can solve this problem. To the unemployed, please in your own interest keep track of the thieves.

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My Dad's Better Than ...

By David Beagan

I have always remembered a story about a dirt-poor Apalachian individual. When asked why he thought he was better than his black neighbors said, "If we can't be better than them, who can we be better than." This stark admission plainly reveals what I think is among the most fundamental aspects of human nature. No, not racism, but something even more fundamental. Everyone has a basic psychological need to be better than someone. And the more people you are better than, the more rewarding it feels.

The existence of this need brings understanding to a variety phenomena of human behavior, and yet I don't ever remember reading or hearing about it as such. I as far as I know, there is no name for this.

It reveals itself in countless little details of life. From Garrison Keillor's tongue in cheek description of Lake Wobegon as a place where, "... all the children are above average" to the highest form of compliment, "he is one of the best players in the world." Remember the license plate, "My kid is an honor student."? Then there were the plates in response, "My kid beat up your honor student" and "my dog is smarter than your honor student."

People say, "What is unique about my story is ..." followed by whatever the speaker thinks makes them special. This is just another way of thinking of oneself as better than others.

In television shows, you routinely see one or more characters who play the stooge. We like that because we know we are smarter than the stooge. We know we are better than the stooge. This brings us comfort and makes us feel good. Apparently, scriptwriters instinctively know this and frequently use it to good advantage to make shows popular.

On the other side of the coin, people react negatively to someone who has an unfounded air of superiority. "You think your better than me," said with a healthy amount of disgust is an oft heard phrase.

This need to be better than someone extends to one's larger social units. I remember seeing a scene in a television program where a grandfather had a heart to heart talk with his granddaughter after she had been in trouble for some bad behavior. He told her, we are Bravermans (family name) we don't act that way. He was invoking family pride

of being better than all those families who accept that kind of bad behavior.

Turning to the arena of sports and games, how can we account for their popularity? For most, the act of winning is an arbitrary accomplishment. Winning a ball game,

prevailing in a board game, becoming the champion of anything is not of any intrinsic value. Yet the legendary Vince Lombardi said, "Winning isn't everything, it is the only thing." And Bobby Fischer

famously said on the Dick Cavette show, "I like the moment when I break a man's ego."

Sport is intensely popular because it gives you a chance to chase after the opportunity to beat an opponent demonstrating for a time your superiority. Not only that, but we can vicariously be winners by identifying with our favorite sports team. When our team wins the championship we are not just better than somebody, our team is better than all the others -- a whole city can spontaneously erupt in joyous celebration. The fact that the competition doesn't always pay off with a win, sometimes we lose, just further strengthens the drive to participate because as we know from behavioral conditioning, a behavior that is only sometimes rewarded is most strongly reinforced.

The basis of the most successful economic system ever owes its success to the need to be better than someone. In capitalism we yearn to compete, to win. At the most basic level we work to satisfy the basic needs of food, shelter, and health, but after that capitalism provides a chance to "beat the other guy."

In the United States long struggle with racism, there are certainly many reasons for its dogged persistence. But I think that perhaps the strongest reason for its persistence is that it provides a ready and convenient group for people to feel superior to.

Undoubtedly this drive to be better than others has strong survival value. Throughout the evolution of mankind, this trait was strengthened and reinforced because it drove people to do more to survive. But I can't help but wonder, wouldn't each of us be happier if we could overcome this. If our sense of well being was based more consistently on the simple things in life regardless of how that measures up against someone else?

Montague: So you say you are better than me?
Capulet: In fact, I do.
Montague: You lie!
Shakespear, "Romeo and Juliet"

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All Governance departments should have a local advisory commission managed by local public and their term should not be more than two years and some travel cost to be reimbursed for such meetings. **Balance the budget. See the effect of the system we have so far, in spite of our belief in social equality, what we got was more disparity between the haves and have-nots, daily necessities of comfortable lives requirements of roof, shelter and food.**

2. As we the Public don't have a house for all of us, but can we afford the houses for our Public servants and Politicians? All housing of the central and state Government should be sold to public and money thus raised should pay off the loans. **No transfers.** Locals will have the affinity to solve problems and are in alliance with the local public as well. No permission to open schools, colleges and universities especially in rural areas (why do we have only one rural University in Bharat Ravindra Bharati) but an independent authority should accredit them all. As we have done for small scale and medium Industry can be opened and no permission of Government needed. The post of all **Judges** should be filled by election, for a term of five to seven years, other than Supreme Court Judges, court fee structure should be able to cover the cost of running a judiciary system. But they can be expelled by majority of Lok Sabha members in case of dispute. **No free bees, neither to public nor to three P.** **Rastrapati Bhawan** should be made into a museum as suggested by Gandhi ji. In order to reduce corruption a three-tier service should be there in each and every department, if you pay more money your work will be done first but still as per laid down norms that less paid also will be done in timely fashion (As it is being done in railway and passport). All Governance jobs should be term jobs and no more than three terms for an assignment. And these should be open to bids and if people are going to make money anyway that is why they pay money as bribes to get jobs. Then why shouldn't government coffers be filled than individual's pockets.

3. **All India's services should be scrapped like IAS, IPS, IFS and IRS** etc. Also the posts of DM, Commissioner and Governors etc. which are not adding any value to public services, should be abolished, as they do not add any value to serve the public or add anything for progress, rather they are impediments and their big mansions should be sold at public options. People with the right 'serving the public attitude' are to be appointed as and when, where they are required by local bodies. **Again please note we are only talking against the system not the people, we have to figure out together how to invest in people.**

4. A white paper about how our tax Rupees are collected and spent should be published every year to inform the public. Secrecy then only corruption will

come down. Secrecy should be limited to the military and National security issues. All others issues, including budget provisions, should be publicly debated.

5. At present, our so-called Politicians, Police and Public servants (only 60 lakhs) are spending 60 percent of the nations resources on themselves. What then is left for developments and to solve other problems? Our motto "**Small government is the best government**".
6. The ballot issue should be the Prime mover for Money, Manpower, Management (MMM). Three pronged Taxes are required Local, State and Central, so that tax sharing is simple, the Public should be the prime mover for the economy not the Government.
7. That is my Dream of Bharat Mahan and you can have yours, but in the end we all have to compromise on one dream and act on it, only then our Bharat will be Mahan We don't need the professional politicians and their terms in office should be restricted to two only. As we also don't need to make politics a family business. The Tulu pump is the most popular in India for a solution to the water problem we are sure there must be more than 10 laks pumps working in Delhi alone, **we only need some 500,000 PUMP for rural India in order to take care of poorest of the poor.**

These are all my way of saying things should be, order or extend can be changed but these are seven steps to pump up the public.

Now some of the prevailing abbreviations and their new meanings.

Abbreviation	Old	New
PM	Prime Minister	Public Managed
PMO (Most influential office in India)	Prime Minister Office	Public Managed Organizations
PUMP	Pump	Promote Uninterrupted Motion is Progress Public Understand Mentorship Program Problem Understand Mentoring Managed Public

The population of India is projected to surpass that of China in the year 2025. At 1.5 billion people, it will become the world's most populous nation.

Mental Exercise

Puzzle It Over

By David Beagan

Sandglasses

Having 2 sand-glasses: one 7-minute and the second one 4-minute, how can you correctly time 9 minutes?

Pain Reliever

A mad logician, Dr. Epidimes, despite his insanity, always tell the truth. He has taken you hostage and poses you this challenge. "If you tell a lie I will apply a painful shock to your left hand. If you tell the truth I will apply a painful shock to your right hand." Short of remaining silent forever, what can you say to escape pain free?

Water Works

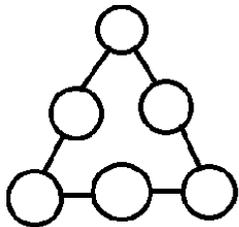
Fire hydrants have a bolt on top that is used to open them to allow water to flow. These bolts have five sides. Why? Hint, the bolts are also threaded the opposite way.

Hat Colors

A teacher has a teamwork test for his 20 students. With the lights out, each student will have a white hat or black hat placed on their head. Then the students will line up and the lights will be turned on. The last student in line will be able to see the 19 student's hats in front of him. The 19th student in line will be able to see the 18 hats in front of him, and so on, the first student in line can't see any hats.

The goal is for the students to name the color of their own hat, starting with the 20th student in the line guessing, then the 19th student in the line guessing and so on. The students team grade for the test is 5 points for each correct guess, with a total of 100 points possible. 90 points gets the whole class an A. Random guessing will allow the students to get the color of about half of the hats, which gives everyone an F. But the students talk and plan together to come up with a better strategy. What is it?

Number Triangles



You have the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 to fill in the circles in the triangle. The numbers on each side should add up to 9. Do it again, but now each side should add up to 10. Again with each side adding up to 11. One final time, with each side adding up to 12.

Mystery Creature

They travel in mobs. The males are known as: bucks, boomers or jacks. The females are known as: does, flyers, or jills. What is this creature?

Constant Volume

Start with a cube. Increase the width by a third. Decrease the length by a third. To keep the volume constant (though it is no

longer a perfect cube), by what amount do you change the height?

Answers

Sandglasses

Start both sandglasses by turning them over. After 4 minutes turn over the 4-minute sandglass. When the 7-minute sandglass spills the last grain, turn the 7-minute upside down. Then you have 1 minute in the 4-min sandglass left and after spilling everything, in the 7-min sandglass there will be 1 minute of sand down (already spilt). Turn the 7-min sandglass upside down and let the 1 minute go back. And that's it. $4 + 3 + 1 + 1 = 9$

Pain Reliever

If you say, "You will shock my left hand" then shocking either hand leads to a contradiction.

Water Works

The five sided bolt does not have opposite sides in parallel – or any parallel sides. This makes it more difficult for someone to start the flow of water, as many are tempted to do on a hot day.

Hat Colors

The students come up with a strategy that will get the class an A by correctly guessing at least 19 hat colors. Once everyone is in line, the 20th person in line uses his guess to provide information to the others. He counts up the number of white hats he sees in front of him. If there are an even number of white hats, he says "white" for his guess, if an odd number, he says "black."

The 19th person in line can use this to determine the color of his hat. If the 20th said "white" and he sees an even number of hats, he knows his is black, or if he sees an odd number of white hats, his is white. If the 30th said "black," similar reasoning leads him to the correct answer.

The 18th person sees the hats in front of him and knows the previous selections and so can use the same logic to guess his hat color. Each person down the line similarly knows the hats he sees and the correct guesses he has heard to logically call out his hat's color.

Number Triangles

9: 1 6 5 2 4 3 10: 1 4 5 5 2 3 11: 5 1 4 6 3 2 12: 6 1 2 5 3 4

Mystery Creature

It is, of course, the kangaroo.

Constant Volume

If you increase the height by an eighth then the volume will remain constant.

The Land of the Nile

By Bala Prasad



Talking about Egypt in recent times, Senator John McCain said, “This, I would argue, is probably the most dangerous period of history in our entire involvement in the Middle East, at least in modern times.” Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently echoed a similar sentiment, commenting that “The world is watching the situation in Libya with alarm.”

It is clear that we are seeing the beginning of fundamental change in the Middle East, but the transition will be slow, and not all countries will be affected. I think the key places to watch are the non-oil-producing countries, like Egypt, Tunisia and, to a certain extent, Jordan and Morocco. Those are the countries where there is significant pressure for economic and political reform. And, there you cannot buy off the population easily, which is the typical strategy of the rich oil states. I suspect that years from now, these non-oil-producing states will look significantly different from the way they look now.

In the oil-producing states, by contrast, change will be more evolutionary. Eventually there will be kinder, gentler monarchies that spread the wealth around more evenly. The key country in this category is going to be Saudi Arabia. I think change in Saudi Arabia will come very, very slowly. It will be evolutionary change rather than revolutionary change.

And then there is Egypt. Some people think Egypt will one day look like Indonesia today. A decade ago, many believed Indonesia would not even exist as a country after its president fell. It was poor. It had the dangers of Islamic fundamentalism, extremism and jihadi groups. People questioned its very validity as a real country. But the democratic political system stabilized Indonesia, providing outlets for some of these endemic tensions. Of course, there were hiccups along the way, but when aren't there? Indonesia still remains a very complicated place with a lot of corruption, dysfunction and some problems of Islamic extremism, but, for the most part, it has been a stable democratic country with economic reform. I think this is a good model for Egypt to strive for.

As we mull over the future of the Middle East, I cannot help but ask: Is it in America's best security

interests for the nations of North Africa and the Middle East to be free countries? Would we rather have a freely elected government in Egypt that is headed by the Muslim Brotherhood, for example, or would we rather not have democracy there at all? Does people power trump paternalistic authority every time, even if those people are hostile to us and our way of life?



I know it is nice to think that we stand as the leading democratic nation in the world, on the side of liberty for all. But if the price of oil goes up as a result of Middle Eastern countries becoming democracies, or if wars break out among them – certainly very real possibilities – would we prefer that their people be ruled by repressive regimes rather than political parties? Are we for democracy for some of the people, some of the time?

I do not know the answer to these questions, dear reader. But as we ponder the future of the Middle East, we must also ponder how its future affects our future, and with that, whether what is best for those countries is best for our country. Only time will tell.

Sincerely,

Bala Prasad

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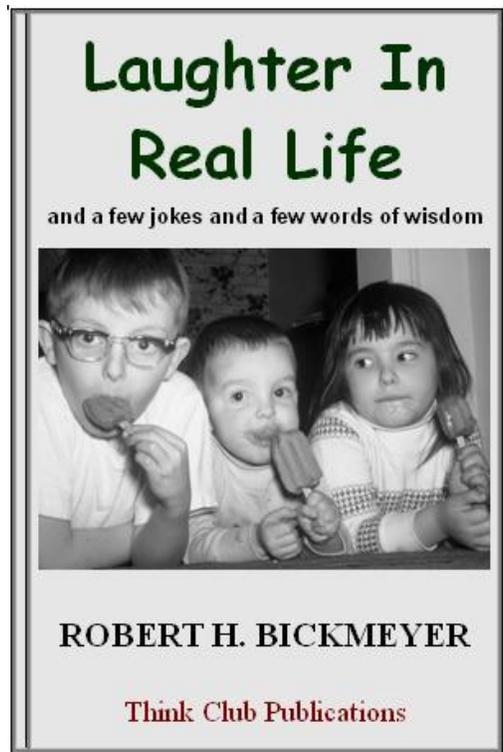
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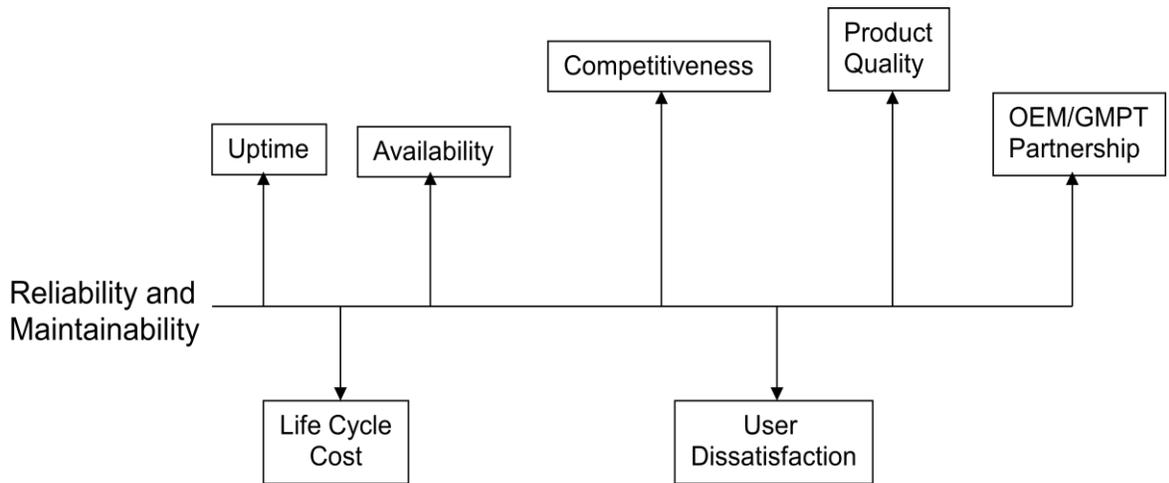
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