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independent thinking

Published Quarterly

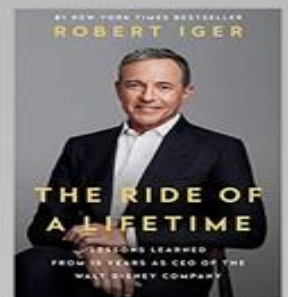
Volume 24.4 Fall 2020



Entitlement **vs** Empowerment

I Fear A Divided America

**Book Review: The Ride of a
Lifetime by Robert Iger**



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Entitlement or Empowerment? Choice Is Ours By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



Lately, we have been hearing a lot about entitlement and empowerment. This has a special significance in view of the recent disturbances happening in America's major cities. It seems that the line between entitlement and empowerment is blurred due to the noise coming from various partisan groups who love fishing in troubled waters.

"Entitlement is the belief that one is inherently deserving of privileges or special treatment" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). The problem with entitlement is that it can be an impediment to one's own potential. It can also mean surrendering one's control over to destiny at the cost of self-achievement and self-esteem. Many of our readers who came to this country in the 1960s and 1970s had only eight dollars in their pocket and an education to go with. The education was mostly provided by their parents which, in turn, empowered them

to go out and earn a living. They still had to go through the struggle of finding jobs and surviving through frequent layoffs. Many of them painted houses and bused tables in the interim. Even when employed, the insecurity of losing jobs and worrying about the next economic cycle were their constant companions.

According to Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "Empowerment is the granting of the power, right or authority to perform various acts or duties." Empowerment enables one to get stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's own life and claiming one's rights.

In a society of equals, no one inherently deserves anything. Everything has to be earned without any special treatment. No one gets anything above and beyond what he or she should receive. Problem is that we don't live in

a utopian society with equal playing fields. Yes, there are some who are born with a silver spoon in their mouth and others who live in a world void of any hope. This is nothing new. This has been there since the beginning of the civilization in every corner of the world. The good news is that the gap between haves and have-nots has shrunk. According to World Bank, “over the last 25 years, more than a billion people have lifted themselves out of extreme poverty, and the global poverty rate is now lower than it has ever been in recorded history.”

However, according to the same sources, “More than 700 million people live in poverty around the world, living on less than \$1.90 a day. Every day, 15,000 children die of preventable diseases like diarrhea and pneumonia. More than 260 million children are out of school, limiting their chances of breaking the cycle of poverty.” This makes us think, do they need entitlement or empowerment?

Entitlement has been used by the rulers and politicians to keep the masses dependent, loyal and pacified. The use of entitlement (present day welfare) caused the fall of the Roman Empire. The soldiers were given exorbitant retirement packages in the form of free tracts of farmland or large bonuses of gold equal to more than a decade’s worth of their salary. They were also given enormous and periodic bonuses in order to prevent uprisings.

Today, entitlement is used by many dictators in the Arab world to keep their subjects from revolting against them. The locals lead a cushy life working one hour a day mostly in public sectors. The real work is done by temporary migrant laborers. As a result, we don’t hear any innovation or erudite coming from those countries. They are kept vegetating and satiated to avoid any trouble for the rulers.

In big democracies like the USA and India, entitlement is used by the politicians to maintain their vote banks. The politicians want to keep certain sections of people impoverished so that they would depend on freebies and

would vote for them. This can’t be more self-evident than Mr. Biden’s recent statement, “If you are still deciding..., you ain’t black.” These politicians are demagogues with personal history of hypocrisy who’d always place their own political agenda above the needs of the disadvantaged.

Empowerment perpetrates the feeling that we will only get what we will earn and not necessarily what we may feel we deserve. A good example of empowerment was set by Miss Rosa Parks. Miss Parks refused to offer her bus seat to a white person on December 5, 1955 which started the famous Montgomery Bus Boycott and ignited the civil rights movement. Her message was about rights of blacks not entitlement.

Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke, “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” Rev. King’s civil rights campaign played a pivotal role in ending racial segregation and the denial of voting rights to African Americans in the southern states. It also created a cultural shift in attitudes on race issues.

In the 1960s, America was marred by racial riots. Berry Gordy took a different approach. He started Motown label that brought unknown black artists (and whites also) on the world stage including Otis Redding, Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross and dozens of others. He empowered the black musicians to make waves in the world of music. We can feel their contribution in the air all the time.

The world is full of stories of liberations through empowerment in every aspect of human life including women’s rights, freedom of nations from imperialists, elimination of certain social stigmas and inclusiveness. They all happened through empowerment not entitlement. Entitlement is like opium which creates addiction in us, whereas entitlement is like a medicine that can cure us. The choice is ours.

Commentary

I Fear A Divided America

by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

The relentless social engineering designed and forced upon us by the liberal media and Hollywood alike is finally working. It is "mission accomplished" for them. Since we are finally acting like Stepford's Wives (1975 movie) where a character named Joanna Eberhart suspects that the submissive housewives in her new an upscale male dominated neighborhood may be robots created by their husbands. Actually, the wives were conditioned by their husbands to act dutifully and be compliant like robots. That's what we have become – programmed robots.

As a result, we think what our coders want us to think and speak what they want us to speak. We are instructed not to see what may really be in front of us. We are asked to infer things that may not exist. Please don't misunderstand me. I am a supporter of justice and equality, but when I say that the rioters in Portland and New York have gone too far, my own friends and some relatives label me as a racist, extreme rightist and uncaring which I am not.

I am not supposed to say anything good about the present administration (I acknowledge their failures). If I do, I am branded as a supporter of

white supremacists and insensitive towards the oppressed.

If I say that I don't want school curriculums to encourage gay lifestyle, I am immediately frowned upon and called a homophobe. In many high schools they are celebrating

pregnant Senior Queen and unwed daddy Senior King. If I resent that, I am ridiculed. They are dispensing condoms and birth control pills in middle schools. If I say that it should be left to parents' discretion, I am humbled.



I am just supposed to accept what the culture force wants me to accept. I am reminded of communist revolutions in Russia and China where the nonconformists were jailed, tortured and murdered along with their families. It is happening in campuses all over where nonconformists, in their view, are boycotted and silenced. I fear that someday the culture police will become so powerful that they will drag me out of my house and beat me up. No one will say anything out of fear or due to their own distorted vision of justice. That may include my own friends and relatives.

Then there is another extreme, post-libertarian also known as "alt-right." "Some of them openly adopt fascism. They even advocate the creation of a white state on the North American

continent” to be achieved through peaceful ethnic cleansing.” (Paul Starr in The American Prospect)

There is no denying that the right-wing terrorism in America is increasing. The white supremacists and anti-government extremists, such as militia groups and so-called sovereign citizens are advocating plotting attacks against government, racial, religious, and political targets in the United States.

I fear them equally for my safety and security. I am again reminded of communist revolutions in Russia and China where the nonconformists were jailed, tortured and murdered along with their families.

I have never seen this country divided like this before in my 47 years of living here. Everything is political such as wearing mask, gun control, allocating money for post-office, NASCAR racing, zombies, UFOs and so on. You name it and you will see the political divide. I don't fit in anywhere. That makes me even more fearful.

*“I fear the onset of a murderous campaign,
I fear the gremlins that have colonized my brain,*

And what else do I fear?

Let me begin again.” -Ciaran Carson

**All Lives Matter
By Ashokkumar Lal**

All lives matter,
Be it white or black.
Once someone is dead,
Once a house is burnt,
Once the US flag torn,
We all lose.

Folks let's get together,
Let's think for a change again,
Let's put in all our efforts
Please pardon the cliché
But Let' make America great again

We gave so much to the world,
Asking nothing in return,
We made so many souls happy,
While we were struggling,

We got to stay together,
Cry together, smile together.
We still have to help others.
So we got to stay together.

HUMOR

Talk To Me By Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



The confinement caused by Covid-19 has robbed fun from my life to a great extent. I am tired of buying everything online. I miss the personal interaction so much that I decided to visit local stores and chat with the shopkeepers. I was like a shopper without a cause. I went inside our neighborhood drug store. I went right up to the pharmacist who asked me, “Hi! How can I help you, sir?”

Me: “Yes, I saw on the news that the President Trump was saying that you could treat the outbreak with hydroxychloroquine.”

Pharmacist: “I don’t know what President Trump was talking about. I don’t watch TV.”

Me: “Is there going to be a shortage? What if I can’t get hydroxychloroquine?” I loved pronouncing hydroxychloroquine.

Pharmacist: “Sir, I certainly understand your concern. Please have your doctor state the reason it’s being prescribed. At this time, we have not received word of a shortage, but we are monitoring the situation daily.”

Me: “Oh, thank you! I just heard the president saying it again on TV and now I’m afraid everyone is going to buy it up!”

Pharmacist: "Again, I don't know what the president is talking about, sir. Is there anything else I can help you with?"

Me: "I heard you saying twice that you didn't know what the president was talking about. I am going to report you to the president. Thank you!"

I gave the pharmacist a pack of aspirin and asked him to ring that for me.

Me: "Excuse me, how much are these aspirins?"

Pharmacist: "They're \$4.99, sir."

Me: "The sign over there says they're \$4.99."

Pharmacist: "That's right."

Me: "They said they're \$4.99 on the radio."

Pharmacist: "Yes."

Me: "So how much are they?"

Pharmacist: "Four. Ninety. Nine."

Me: "Well, I just don't know."

Pharmacist: "What do you mean, you don't know?"

Me: "I just can't be sure how much they are."

Pharmacist: "Well, if I'm telling you they're \$4.99, the sign is telling you they're \$4.99, and the radio is telling you they're \$4.99, then they're probably \$4.99."

Me: "Well, you just never know, the liberal media..."

Pharmacist: "Uh, we're not the media, sir."

Me: "Well, you just never know the liberal media. It could be one of the Democrat's sneaky tricks."

Pharmacist: "We're not the media, sir. We're a store and we don't belong to any party."

Me: "I just hope President Trump can get rid of you Democrats soon. How much are these aspirins?"

Pharmacist: "...\$4.99."

Me: "Well, I just don't know. The liberal media. I guess I'll have to ask someone else."

I asked the pharmacist to wait while I picked some more stuff.

Pharmacist: "Your total is \$35.37 sir."

Me: "What about my discount?"

Pharmacist: "What discount do you mean, sir?"

Me: "I'm a member here, so I get a 10% discount."

Pharmacist: "We don't have a memberships plan for our store. You must have a different store in mind, sir."

Me: "Listen, I want my discount now!"

Pharmacist: "Sir, we do not have a membership program."

Me: "Trump is in charge now, you know. He'll round up all profit mongers like you and it can't happen soon enough."

Pharmacist: "Sir, please stop harassing me otherwise I'll have to call the cop."

Me: "That will be nice. Can you ask for a Republican cop? I don't trust you Democrats."

I left the store before the cops could show up. Oh! It felt so good talking to a real human being, after all!

A Tale of Two Conventions

by Anil Shrivastava “Musafir”

It was a waste of time, it was worth the time, they talked wisdom, they talked foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of make-believe (With apology to Charles Dickens).

“It was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it

was the winter of despair.”
(Charles Dickens)

The above parody and passage should sum up two back to back

2020 conventions of the Democrats and the Republicans not necessarily in the same order. In the following passages I am going to talk about my observations relative to the topics talked about in those conventions. Sorry, I didn’t care much about the glamor and gloom aspects of the two events.

I watch conventions to learn about the candidates’ plans and implementation strategies for the next four years. I don’t succumb to emotional appeals alone nor do I observe the events with colored glasses. I noticed that plans and strategies were missing to a great length in the speeches

made by the



Democratic candidates.

Unfortunately, the Democrats spent their energy whole-heartedly on President Trump’s follies. We all know that. I didn’t have to spend three hours a day for four days to be educated on President Trump’s character. I am just being honest here. Even the Republican defectors like Gov. Kasich

sang to the same choir. They didn't add any bite to my appetite.

The only person who spoke something substantive was Senator Bernie Sanders. He said, "Many of the ideas we fought for, that just a few years ago were considered 'radical,' are now mainstream." There also Mr. Biden appeared sitting on the fence not knowing which side to jump on to. He seemed more interested in playing it safe. As an independent thinker and voter, I was disappointed.

As mentioned above, I watch conventions to learn about candidates' plans and implementation strategies for the next four years.

The GOP candidates set their vision on creating 10 million new jobs in the next 10 months applying the policies that had created jobs before the pandemic. They aimed to create one million new small businesses. They'd allow 100% deductions for essential industries like pharmaceuticals and robotics that would bring back manufacturing to the United States. They'd give no federal contracts to companies who'd outsource to China

They promised to continue empowering women through Women's Global Development and Prosperity (W-GDP) initiative. They'd establish a permanent manned presence on the moon and land first woman on the lunar surface.

They were specific about having a COVID-19 vaccine by the end Of 2020; lowering healthcare insurance premiums; providing

coverage for all preexisting conditions and ending surprise medical billing.

They sounded serious about bringing law and order to American cities and help pass congressional term limits.

They'd bock illegal immigrants from becoming eligible for taxpayer-funded welfare, healthcare, and free college tuition; make deportation for non-citizen gang members mandatory; dismantle human trafficking networks and end sanctuary cities to restore our neighborhoods and protect our families.

They would work on winning the race to 5G and establish a national high-speed wireless Internet network.

They promised to stop endless wars and bring our troops home and get allies to pay their fair share.

The thing that struck me the most was unprecedented black participation in the GOP convention. Included in the roster were Kim Klacik who is running for the late Elijah Cummings' seat in Baltimore, Herschel Walker, the ex-football player, Vernon Jones, a lifelong Democrat from Georgia, Sen. Tim Scott from South Carolina and more. They all applauded the police and condemned the violence. I am in no position to make any prediction, but that will certainly increase the share of black votes in Mr. Trump's favor beyond 8%.

That was my observation, good, bad or ugly. What was yours?



The Ride of a Lifetime: Lessons Learned from 15 Years as CEO of the Walt Disney Company

“The Ride of a Lifetime” is a lesson in management and character authored by Walt Disney Company’s Executive Chairman, Bob Iger.

His business memoir reveals the toughness, risk-taking and agility a successful leader needs to possess even when he or she is on the brink of a meltdown.

“And I tend to approach bad news as a problem that can be worked through and solved, something I have control over rather than something happening to me,” writes Iger.

Iger’s business *mantra* was guided by Roone Arledge, then the president of ABC Sports and ABC news, who insisted, “Innovate or die.”

Iger got his first position at ABC Television as a studio supervisor at 23 and spent the next 31 years moving through more than 20 different positions at the network. He was named CEO of The Walt Disney Company in 2005 and was elected its chairman in 2015.

At Disney, Iger was the driving force behind the acquisitions of Pixar, Lucasfilm, Marvel and, more recently, 21st Century Fox. Many of the above acquisitions involved a leap in the dark.

“Don’t be in the business of playing it safe. Be in the business of creating possibilities for greatness,” states Iger in his book.

A leader of the caliber of Iger needs to maintain a strict self-discipline. He rises at 4:15 each morning and works out seven days a week.

Iger’s accounts of deal making are very intriguing. There is a mention of a meeting that

Author: Robert Iger

Publisher: Random House Publishing Group (Published in 2019, p.330)

took place between Iger and Steve Jobs. Soon after the announcement that Disney had acquired Pixar/Apple, Jobs took Iger on a walk and revealed to him that his cancer had spread to his liver. Jobs was not completely happy with this deal, but Iger was clever enough to woo Jobs directly and became one of his close friends.

Some of his other intriguing deal makings included the agreement for buying Fox over a glass of wine at Rupert Murdoch’s vineyard.

In trying to acquire Marvel, Iger couldn’t track down the company’s elusive leader, Ike Perlmutter.

Iger writes that being and staying positive is one of the most important qualities a leader can have.

“If you walk up and down the hall constantly telling people ‘The sky is falling,’ a sense of doom and gloom will, over time, permeate the company. You can’t communicate pessimism to the people around you. It’s ruinous to morale,” Iger writes.

He says the bottom line is that “no one” wants to follow a pessimist. Optimism is about believing in yourself and your employees’ abilities

As a side note, Iger plans to retire in 2021. Asked about whether he’d run for president in 2024, when he will be 73, he says, “I don’t know that I have it in me.”

-Reviewed by Anil Shrivastava ‘Musafir’

ESSAY

**THERE IS NO PATH TO HAPPINESS.
HAPPINESS IS THE PATH.**



I Can Sense Spirituality in Someone when I See One

by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

Very few among us understand the real meaning of spirituality. At least I don't. Still we use spirituality ambivalently and indeterminately and often mistake it for religious observances and dictum. When it comes to spirituality, we are like "men in the mist."

Most people equate spirituality with religion. Religion is about dogma whereas spirituality is about thought and behavior. As a matter of fact, spirituality involves belief in higher form of intelligence and consciousness running the universe. I am not trying to imply that religion is void of spirituality, but religion includes a myriad of other topics too that camouflage the true meaning of spirituality and leave it to various interpretations. If in doubt, talk to two different religious scholars and find out what I mean.

According to some in the West, spiritualism is a speculative and subjective term that may mean medium, ghosts, afterlife, healing, heaven, hell, supernatural and

mysticism. Spirituality is also considered a separate arm of religion by some that includes communicating with spirits, paranormal power and witchcraft.

According to Hinduism, spirituality is inner purification by transcending ordinary nature and perceptual consciousness to higher states of consciousness. The Buddhists consider spiritualism as the elimination of suffering through enlightened state and understanding of reality. Most scholars all over the world look to either Hinduism or Buddhism when it comes to defining spirituality.

I have not done any critical study of any book on spirituality except for reading "Mandukya Upanishad" on the recommendation of my friend, Dr. Ramesh Patel. Another time my father asked me to read some of the essays written by Aldous Huxley, the British philosopher (1894-1963 AD) when I was a teenager. (My father often asked me to read passages and write

their summaries). I gathered that Mr. Huxley was not much impressed by the prevalent expressions of spirituality, yet believed that through faith one could transcend dogma. He was an agnostic when it came to religion.

Huxley referred to alternative spirituality that believes in transcendental idealism (Later I came to know that Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller were other proponents of transcendental idealism) and combines both the Hindu view of spirituality and Western materialism.

I personally knew a person who died at the age of 99 in 2014. He was a teacher and lived in a village four miles away from the nearest big city where he taught math in a middle school. I'll call him Mr. Prasad (his real name was Mr. Parmeshwar Prasad). I recall my first glimpse at him when I was around three or four years old and lived in the same village, at the time, as Mr. Prasad did.

Mr. Prasad lived in a house made of mud and bricks. He didn't have many possessions other than a bike, a flashlight, a pair of shirts and a small plot of farmland . The village used to get totally dark after the dusk. Mr. Prasad would return to the village in the dark riding his bike holding the flashlight in one hand and balancing the bike with another. He used to do private tutoring after the school for additional income that his wife and two children depended on.

Mr. Prasad had a very pleasant mannerism and was loving to all the children of the village that included me. He was always

content with what he had and didn't ever complain about lack of money or amenities. I saw him for the last time in 2013, a few months before he died in sleep. He had retired from his school job, but still continued private tutoring. He still had the same pleasant mannerism that he permeated decades ago.

That made me think about spirituality. I am neither a scholar nor an erudite by any means but I am perceptive and inquisitive by nature.

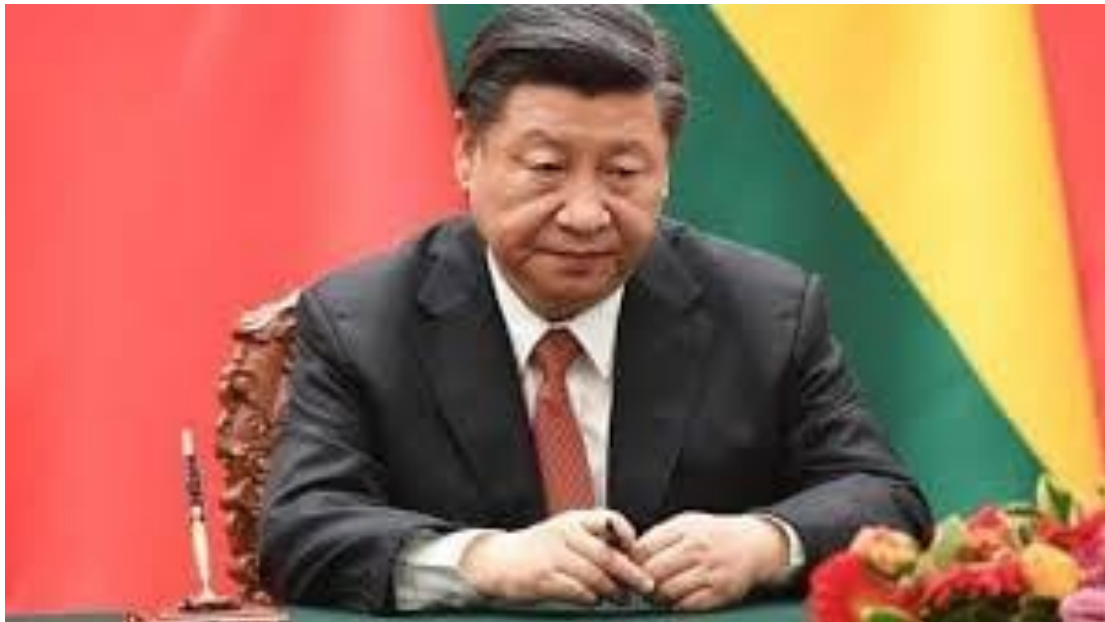
According to my thinking:

- Spirituality is having faith in something beyond the self. That 'something' can be God or a higher power.
- Spirituality is being aware of oneself and knowing how the self is connected with the universe and other organisms around us.
- Spirituality is taking fortune and adversities in stride as phenomena of life. In other words, it is performing one's duties with a smile while coping with challenges in life (performing one's karma).
- Spirituality is seeking happiness beyond material possessions or other external rewards; having

compassion and empathy for others and wanting to make the world a better place. As you can tell from my writing, my pursuit of spirituality has been sketchy at best. But I can say one thing for sure that I can sense spirituality in someone when I see one. In my opinion, Mr. Prasad was a spiritual person.

CURRENT AFFAIRS

China's Grand Plan by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'



These are the dark days of summer despite hours of long daylight. The world, especially the USA and countries belonging to BRICS are grappling with an invisible, deadly enemy trying to destroy our economy and our way of life. China, who created this virus to destroy the US and countries belonging to BRICS is at 29th position in terms of people affected by this deadly virus. Their GDP grew by 3.2% in the second quarter of 2020 while USA's contracted by more than 30%; India's and Europe's declined by double digits in the same period.

Here are the top five countries worst affected by CVIOD-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019) as of August 2, 2020: USA, Brazil, India, Russia and South Africa. Other than USA, all those countries belong to BRICS.

We all know that the USA and India are impediments to China's ambition in dominating the world both militarily and economically. The rest of the countries belonging to BRICS namely, Russia, Brazil and South Africa along with India are the emerging economies capable of threatening China's geo-political and economic ambitions. So, doesn't the spread of the coronavirus seem like a sinister design by China to dominate the world? You be the judge.

To understand this further, let us examine China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). BRI hopes to deliver trillions of dollars in infrastructure financing to Asia, Europe, and Africa. If the initiative follows Chinese practices to date for infrastructure financing, which often entails lending to sovereign borrowers, the third-world will

be subservient to China sooner than later. BRI raises the risk of debt distress in borrower countries. On top of that, China's lending is not recorded by institutions like International Monetary Fund and World Bank. How smart?

China is acting like a loan shark. Countries that fail to service their loans are pressured to support China's geostrategic interests.

Not only that, China has been accused of requiring to own facilities such as seaports and mineral mines in countries that default on China's loan.

In 2012 Sri Lanka turned to China for loans and assistance with an ambitious port project. Since Sri Lanka defaulted on Chinese loan, it had to hand over the port and 15,000 acres of land around it for 99 years to China in December 2015. The transfer gave China control of territory just a few hundred miles off the shores of its rival, India. This also provided China a strategic foothold along a critical commercial and military waterway. The same story is being repeated with Pakistan's Gwadar port, the deepest seaport on earth. Gwadar Port is in Baluchistan province of Pakistan which is operated and controlled by China Overseas Port Holding Company.

China developed Coronavirus, a biological weapon and planned to use that to destroy its rivals. The virus leaked either intentionally or inadvertently from its lab in Wuhan. China quickly controlled the spread of the virus from affecting big cities like Shanghai and Beijing. During that time, it also stopped all the flights coming into China, but kept the outgoing flights open intentionally to spread the virus in Europe, the USA and the countries belonging to BRICS.

Work in Progress

While countries of the world are struggling to find a cure for Covid-19, China is creating

new viruses (biological weapons) to follow the present one. The scientists have identified a new strain of flu soon to come from China that will become another pandemic. It's called "G4 EA H1N1."

If this trend continues (and will continue, most probably), China will soon be the master of the world, if not of the whole universe.

Conclusion

Unfortunately, there are two factors working against the free world. First, they do not have seasoned diplomats who can match the skill and experience that the Chinese leaders possess. The politicians in the free world are preoccupied with power grab and demagoguery rather than caring for the interest of their country. Reminds me of, "Nero fiddled while Rome burnt." In the United States the opposition has spent last four years trying to remove its president. The Congress has not passed any bill to advance infrastructure, education, immigration reform and healthcare. As a matter of fact, they want the economy to deteriorate even further to help them win the presidency in 2020.

Secondly, the US companies and the European politicians (and companies) both have easy virtues. They can sell their soul and their country for gaining a penny in profit. Big businesses are already itching to start manufacturing in China where labor is cheap and without regulation and has a great supply-chain-network to conduct the business.

Sorry for the gloom and doom, but that's the way it appears to me. Please feel free to submit your point of view on this matter.

Thank you for your attention.

Political Correctness

by Srinivasa Bhat

I have spent more than 45 years working for major American corporations. I marvel many peculiarities of their management style, especially their ability to suppress their inner feelings in conducting business with calm in serenity.

Of course, there are always exceptions to the rule.

When I worked in India, I observed that the local managers there had a feudal attitude and had an air of arrogance about them.

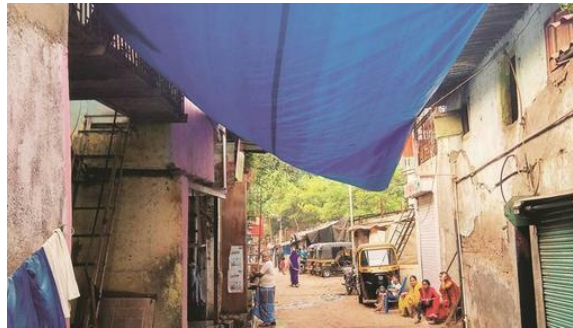
In the US, on the contrary, people maintain a pleasant mannerism at every level of the food chain.

When I was promoted to the managerial level, I had to learn these qualities very soon. That helped me in successfully delivering my tasks.

In my career, I worked internationally on many countries and continents.

I had the opportunity to work in India also for a major US multinational company as a senior manager.

I'd like to share my experience with my American colleague, John who worked with me there. John was a VP.



Many a time we'd commute together.

One time our car had to go through a slum. My conversation with John started like this:

Me: "What do you think of seeing their houses?" I asked.

John: "I am happy to see their creativity. Houses are built very well with the goods and equipment that are available to them."

Me: "Do you get bored of women who come near the car window and beg for a little baby in their lap?"

John: "No, this is the best way to donate, without intermediaries, directly to the deserving."

Me: "Are you bothered by the mosquitoes in your office?"

John: "No, my racket ball, tennis skills have developed by hitting them."

These are just a few examples of John's responses. John was never negative. He always projected the best of the situation.

I admire their political correctness? Isn't this a sign of a gentleman?

(Srinivasan Bhat, an independent thinker, lives in Greater Dallas in Texas.)



Trivia Questions

1. How many Earths could fit inside the sun?
2. How many of the speeches in Shakespeare's plays are recited by women?
3. Which country consumes the most chocolate per capita?
4. What is a duel between three people called?
5. After Antarctica, what is the most sparsely populated continent?
6. Which country has the oldest continuously used national flag?
7. Which planets in our solar system do not have moons?
8. What was the first animated film to be nominated for Best Picture at the Academy Awards?
9. On average, how long does it take food to pass through the human body?
- 10 What is the driest place on Earth?

Answers: 1) 1.3 million 2) 17% 3) Switzerland 4) Truel 5) Australia 6) Denmark 7} Mercury, Venus 8) Beauty and the Beast 9) 53 hours 10) Atacama desert

From Around the World

Aggression on Top of the World” by Anil Shrivastava ‘Musafir’



The India-China border measures 2,100 linear miles running through a high altitude snowy, rugged and almost impassable terrain in the Himalayas. I had just graduated from high school when India and China fought a brief border war in 1962. China claimed and encroached land inside the Indian territory in that war which included a part of now Ladakh, an Indian territory. The Chinese occupied a big chunk of Ladakh called Akasi-Chin which is situated at an elevation of 16,000 ft above the sea level. At the end of the war India and China created a line of control (LOC) along the Indo-China border and decided to solve the problem through negotiations in the future. LOC is not demarcated, and China and

India have differing ideas of where it should be located, leading to regular border transgressions.

In May of 2020, a brawl broke out between Indian and Chinese soldiers stationed at camps near LOC in Ladakh. The Indian soldiers confronted the Chinese troops and lost 20 men in the skirmish. The Chinese are ambiguous about their losses, but it could be between 40 and 100 according to some estimates. As the world has been distracted by the coronavirus pandemic, China has taken a series of aggressive actions in recent months to flex its economic, diplomatic and military muscle.

The spark for the recent tensions seems to be ignited because of a road that Indian Army is building to get to a remote air force base through mountain passes in the Galwan Valley, which is fully within Indian territory. The Chinese don't like it as this may give India a strategic advantage over China in that region.

China is also unhappy with India's actions in August 2019 that ended Jammu and Kashmir state's traditional autonomy and created the Union Territory of Ladakh. China didn't like the change in the status quo as this action projected India as a formidable power in that region. India's superiority in the region also poses a challenge to China's Belt and Road Initiative with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor passing through Pakistan occupied Kashmir bordering Ladakh.

Unfortunately, India's military options are limited beyond border skirmishes. China is on the cusp of matching the United States militarily and has a far superior war machine in comparison to India. However, India can take actions to hurt China economically. New Delhi will likely assess other nonmilitary policy options through boycotting Chinese products, businesses and ventures in India.

The Indian government recently banned 59 apps developed by Chinese companies over concerns that these apps were engaging in activities that threatened national security and defense of India. "ByteDance's TikTok, which counts India as its biggest overseas market; video call apps from Xiaomi, which is the top smartphone vendor in India; two of Alibaba Group's apps (UC Browser and UC News) and many more are the significant names targeted by India." (Source: TechChurch June 20, 2020). India is also contemplating putting restrictions on Chinese equipment in its large and growing telecom sector banning China's involvement in building India's 5G infrastructure.

There too, it's not going to be a smooth sail for India. Targeting Chinese-backed apps would mean a heavy blow to the Indian start-up

companies. "Many of those companies depend on Chinese tech giants Alibaba and Tencent." (Source: Global Times, June 30, 2020). Companies backed by Chinese capital have made inroad in Indian businesses. Moreover, India's policies have always been unstable in this regard. As I am writing this article, TikTok just said it has been invited to meet with concerned Indian government stakeholders for an opportunity to respond and submit clarifications. Such gestures project India's indecisiveness and weakness.

There is no doubt that India is too dependent on Chinese and American technologies. India needs to be a pioneer in developing its own system and not depend on China or the US for innovation. For example, the leader in India's smartphone market is the Chinese company Xiaomi. The number two player is South Korea's Samsung. Chinese companies Vivo, Oppo and Realme are at number three, four and five respectively. There is no Indian firm with any meaningful product in India's market.

The founder of Infosys, Narayana Murthy, was quoted as saying: "There is not a single invention from India in the last 60 years that became a household name globally." He added that India had not produced "any idea that led to the earth-shaking invention to delight global citizens."

Indian universities need to do more research and produce entrepreneurs who can produce platforms like Microsoft, Google, Apple, Alibaba and Baidu. Until India does that, it will remain a second-class power in comparison to China and will have to live with their bullying.

India hopes that the current standoff would be resolved through dialogue. PM Netanyahu of Israel once rightly stated, "The weak don't survive, the strong survive. You make peace, alliances with the strong. You are able to maintain peace by being strong."

Out of My Mind

It Was A Nice Day by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

I was asked again, "How do you spend time during self-quarantine."

"Well. I wake up late, very late. That kills the morning - completely so. Then I get on social media. Social media is a big town. I meet nearly everyone walking there on a daily basis for a lot of things, such as status updates, photo sharing, preaching, providing corona remedies and general chatting. That would have irritated me in pre-corona days. Now, that's my only social contact that I can look forward to. Beggars can't be choosers. Can they?"

Half the year is already gone and I am still self-quarantined and, finally, I am lovin it. This has definitely changed me for better as I have learned to appreciate people more. I am patient with them and respect their views no matter how stupid they can be. I don't argue with them anymore. What else is there to do, anyway? I don't want them to block or delete me.

One of my nagging friends called me to settle an old score and shouted over the phone, "You have to put two and two together. Remember, 2 plus 2 will always be 4 no matter what your opinion is."

Usually I would have tried one-upmanship on him but this time I replied, "Wow my friend I totally agree with you. I like how you added 2 and 2 together and got 4. Very insightful!"

Another friend of mine always gives me inspirational lectures because I look uninspired most of the time. Today his sermon was on hope. "Look at the brighter side. Look up, the sky is blue."

Though it was pouring where I was, I replied, "I totally agree with what you said. I like how you

used the color blue as a form of imagery to describe the sky that was such a powerful statement you made."

Another friend of mine who is frustrated with Corona situation wrote on Facebook, "Life sucks."

"I completely agree with you one hundred percent. Thank you so much for opening my eyes to a brighter and more enlightening future! Have a glorious day," I replied.

There are some questions that are impossible to answer. Someone posted on twitter: "Does anyone know how people in 1918 did their pandemic without the internet?"

Someone wanted to know, "How to propose to a girl during quarantine?"

That took care of most of my day. I realize that I have become very observant during these Corona confinement days. I observed a spider and realized that it was the best web designer.

Who said that sports were dead? I watched the birds flight over a worm from my window. The Cardinals led the Blue Jays 3-1.

I also found out that the best way to avoid touching my face was holding wine glasses in both my hands.

Oh! Tomorrow is Monday. I love Mondays. That's our garbage day. I get so excited; I can't decide what to wear. After all, I'll be seeing some of my neighbors and will say Hi to them!

Well friends, that was quite a nice and productive day. Finally, it's 11 pm, I got to remove my day pajamas and put on my night pajamas now. Good night!

Observation

Religion and God

by Anil Shrivastava 'Musafir'

I usually don't talk much about religion and God because I find it vague, unintelligible and divisive. I consider myself a man of ordinary intelligence, therefore, clarity is very important to me, nonetheless, I still try to read religious books and articles in hope of finding some clarity on the subject. Unfortunately, more I read, more baffled I become. I asked several theologians and godmen to explain religion and God to me. Their explanations made me even more frustrated.

I also feel that God has been hijacked by religion and He must be freed. Sometimes I listen to short lectures by Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev. He doesn't preach nor does he recite garbled passages from scriptures. He clarifies matters related to spirituality in a layman's terms. I am not his follower, but his talks make sense to me. According to him, religion is a belief. When we believe in something, we don't question what we don't know. Interestingly, according to him, even atheists are religious because they believe in nihility of God. Since they believe in something without questioning and without knowing, that makes them religious.

According to me, the role of religion should be providing guidelines for every situation in life, spreading love and service to humanity and explaining matters related to spirituality to its followers.

Some examples of providing guidelines are Five Pillars of Islam, Ten Commandments of Christianity or four Yoga(s) mentioned in Hinduism. I just gave some random examples to make my point. Religious practices are much broader and not limited to what I mentioned above.

Trying to understand the concept of God is even more complex. This has created divisiveness,

cynicism and fanaticism among fellow human beings. Here are some examples:

The Christians believe Jesus is God, the son of God, the second person of the Trinity. Islam rejects the divinity of Christ. So, it cannot be said that they worship the same God. (Ref: An, Kirikand. "Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God? College Washington Post, December 17 2015).

According to Islam, Allah is the only God and Prophet Muhammad is His messenger (shahadah). Does that mean that Allah is different than other gods? No one knows.

The Hindus believe in plurality of gods but they also insist on God's oneness. So, it can be said that it is both a monotheistic and polytheistic religion depending on who you talk to.

Buddhism doesn't mention God.

In my view, the concept of God should be left to individuals because all prayers go to the same Supreme Being or to the same phenomenon. I am not trying to impose my concept on others; I am simply stating my thoughts here. I worship idol figures out of fear, want and for conforming to the society that I live in. Many (not all) in other religions do what they do for same reasons.

God is someone or some marvel who creates, preserves and destroys life and matter around and beyond us. That Being or phenomenon is infinite, without any beginning and end, formless, immeasurable, indefatigable, indestructible, all pervasive and inexplicable. That is what I think. The choice should be strictly ours to decide God's identity. As I know, Hinduism is the only religion that allows us to do so.