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4. It is an ironic habit of human beings
to run faster when they have lost
their way.

'Blitzkrieg' was the war mantra
given by Adolf Hitler when he sought to
purify the human race. On his fascist way
to exterminate Jews, suppress dissent, defeat
communism he became more and more desperate.
Ironically he first signed a secret pact with
Soviets and then attacked them. Even during
harsh winters, he ordered his soldiers to
continue fighting the Soviet army.

This essay will examine the
contradiction in human behaviour and
actions when they get so disillusioned with

their ego that despite being on the wrong path they not only fail to course-correct but instead they tend to run faster on it.

We will first look at several instances to bring home the above point and then try to analyse the reason for this ironic habit. This is to establish how we can rectify it and hence we will conclude with measures to avoid falling into the spiral.

Examples galore

In his 'Rashmirathi' poem, Ramdhari Singh Dinkar says that 'Jab naash manush par chahta hai, Pehle virk mar jaata hai' to describe the state of greed for power of Duryodhan. He disrupted the respect of Draupadi, claimed control over whole Kuru kingdom but was not even satiated by it. His refusal to accept mediation of Shri Krishna

led to the Mahabharata war. He thought he could defeat the Pandavas and chose army over support of Shri Krishna.

The vast tapestry of human history provide us lessons through rulers like Ramagupta (ultimately defeated by Chandragupta II),

Aurangzeb (who set the wheels of decline of Mughal empire) who with their ego and haughtiness steered their path of self-destruction.

In modern history, when Britishers realized they could no longer rule over India, they left in such a hurry that through the Mountbatten Plan they partitioned India through a Redcliffe Boundary Award who had never even set foot in India. The result was horrors with huge carnage, riots, atrocities against women and millions

of refugees. Similarly de-colonization was in such a hurry in many African countries that they failed to develop long lasting peace and development and created new faultlines through divide and rule policies (example, artificial borders).

In modern politics, it can be seen in large scale defections and the speed with which chosen candidates switch sides to form a ruling majority. Not only is it morally and ethically wrong with blatant disregard to mandate of will but also violation of constitutional provision of tenth schedule. Criminalization of politics noted by Justice Vohra Committee has been ever increasing as noted by Association of Democratic Reforms.

This can be seen in other spheres of human life as well. UN Secretary General recently remarked that we are on a climate

hell with our foot on accelerator. WMO reports suggest that 2°C temperature threshold will be crossed within next four years itself. Yet, we see no concrete action for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Consider, for example, recent Republican primary debates where candidates are calling actions for more fracking and coal usage.

American society, seems to have lost their way under ever-increasing consumerism, burgeoning mental health crisis, rising mass-shootings and rapidly increasing polarization on issues of abortion, rights of black and LGBTQIA+ community. They are failing to create a bi-partisan consensus for the right path for the so called leader of free world. Instead, they chaotically withdrew

from Afghanistan, leaving the space for Taliban rule. In Russia-Ukraine conflict instead of trying to find peaceful solution they are fuelling the war with more aid and weapons and advanced technology. Their weaponisation of currency and trade has thus led to countries seeking de-dollarization and shift towards bilateral trade.

Similarly in Russia, from Crimean annexation to special military operation in Ukraine, C. Raja Mohan ~~to~~ argues that President Putin has emerged in an unwinnable war. Instead we see news of ever-increasing troops mobilization, recruitment of private mercenaries and atrocities like Bucha killings.

Even in new scientific developments, there seems to be a divorce of science from

humanity and spirituality. We are instead developing new weapon technology like Fractional orbital Bombardment system, Anti-satellite technology, weaponization of space technologies. Sam Altman, founder of OpenAI, which developed Chat GPT has himself called for breaks on unregulated development of generative artificial intelligence.

These examples elucidate the irony of running faster when someone is lost and misguided. We now analyse why this happens so that reasons can lead us to develop counter-mechanisms.

Let's start with the why

Robert Frost in his famous poem remarks that he chose the less travelled path when two roads diverged into the woods. Thus, exploring new ways and getting lost

on them is not the issue. But how we respond to the challenge is the key. Are we guided by a spirit of critical enquiry or does our ego prevent us from accepting our own mistakes?

Losing the way completely entails absence of objectivity, reason, reform to course-correct. It is a uni-dimensional perspective and an echo-chambered world view of seeing everything in black and white. It thus creates a reinforcing positive loop of cause and effect complementing each other.

For example, communalization leads to ghettoization which further fans polarization and hatred due to lack of interaction and cultural sensitivities. Recent cases of violence in Haryana (Nuh), Rajasthan (Udaipur), Maharashtra (Nasik), Uttar Pradesh (Bareilly) illustrate how our approach to deal with sensitive matters is fraught given massive rise in intolerance.

Having understood the reasons, we now analyse the remedy to break this chain.

Window of opportunity

Article 51A(h) makes it a fundamental duty for everyone to develop a spirit of enquiry and reform. Our ancient Indian philosophy like Kanad philosophy and Nyay has emphasized on both knowledge and evidence (Pramaan). Gyan Yoga calls for removal of ignorance to attain liberation.

Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi have shown this through both his words and actions. When he found out that violence had eruption in Chauri - chaura he called off the nascent non-cooperation movement despite the opposition from his own party members.

Dr. S. Jaishankar in his recent

Business 20 Summit speech said that every crisis is an opportunity to redefine oneself and emerge out victoriously. India today is leading the world through G20 presidency and has established herself as voice of Global South. Our engagement with world is inclusive, demand based and partner led as guided by Kangara principles.

Economic Survey in its latest report has called for a Barbell strategy of data driven decision making to change the policy trajectory as and when needed. It is evident in our approach to Atmanirbhar Bharat in a re-globalized world.

This suggests that while the habit of running faster for human beings when they have lost their way is ironic but not universal and can be correct through emotional intelligence and critical enquiry of self and objective world-view.

Further, we should develop the courage
and integrity to act on it and face the
challenge of course-correction head on. As
Edmund Burke remarked that no one made
a graver mistake than one who thought he
could only do so little and hence did nothing.

Section - B

⑧ No man was ever wise by chance

During the inauguration of Banaras Hindu University, Grandhiji called out on the elite nature of Indian freedom struggle dominated by lawyers, teachers and doctors. He said that our salvation will truly come from peasants and poor through a mass movement. This wisdom was result of years of struggle in South Africa and first hand experience of treatment metted by Britishers and exploitation of poor. It was in Phoenix and Tolstoy Farm that satyagraha and non-violence was fine-tuned and tried & tested against British.

This essay is an appraisal of several factors that led to development of wisdom and thus establish that it is not a product of luck but active pursuit of excellence. We will look at various examples across space

and time to develop the argument of how wisdom is not a by chance gift of nature but something which is earned.

Examples galore

When Siddhartha was born, sages proclaimed that he will be the biggest teacher humanity will ever see. However, his father wanted him to become a king and thus did everything to protect young boy from hard realities of the outside world. But Siddhartha continuously saw the signs of life — sick and old man, dead man, and a monk. Though it was a natural accident of him seeing these signs but what he did next was not fate but rather a conscious choice of renunciation.

Buddha became so with his own realization of truth as he sat near the Niranjana river in Bodhgaya and gave the four noble truths of life and eight folded path.

Similarly Lord Mahavir too left the comfort of royal palace to wander into the forests and gain Kaivalya. Today, Jains do this through Deeksha - samaroh where they renounce the worldly ^{material} pleasures in search of wisdom and absolute truth.

Ancient Indian philosophy has given the doctrine of 'karma' that what one sows, he shall reap. This is the heart of critique of luck factor in gaining or achieving the goal one is set out for. This challenges the ^{lary} reason that one's success or knowledge is a gift bestowed upon him by nature and the Almighty himself.

Consider for example, Ashoka, the Chakravartin Samrat. From 'Bherighosh' to 'Dhammaghosh' (i.e. war declaration to spreading peace) it was a conscious and reasoned choice to promote the message

of love and peace after realizing the carnage that happened in Kalinga war. He could have overlooked the sufferings of the masses he were to govern after winning the battle, like other rulers. Instead he chose to resolve his remorse and dilemma by active and concrete actions of spreading Dharma.

India, the mother of democracy, has thus always promoted the culture of dialogue and debate. Mandan Mishra believed in 'karma-kanda' of Mimansa but he debated with reason against Adi Shankaracharya which was fairly judged by his own wife. It was through this process that he could realize the wisdom of Advaita philosophy and the importance of path of knowledge to seek liberation.

Similarly in southern India, Bharat Mandapam of Besavanna promoted

dialogue among the shramanas through 'Vachchanas'. This was at heart of both gaining and spreading wisdom.

This wisdom or realization of knowledge is thus an active pursuit marked with courage, determination and perseverance. Consider for example, the nineteenth and twentieth century socio-religious reforms in India. vidyasagar was ostracized by his own family when he raised voice against years of prejudice against women and promoted widow remarriage.

It was not a chance that so many of reformers from Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Dayanand Saraswati to Gound Ranade to Dayanand Saraswati emerged in various parts of India. Through spirit of reform, critical enquiry, humanism they led the change movement against caste based atrocities and gender based discrimination.

They studied the Vedas and ancient

texts like Upanishads to realize the dominance of orthodox priestly class and their subjective realization and interpretation of spiritual texts. They published in newspaper, monthly and weekly magazines like Sarvad Kaurandi, Satyarth Prakash to further raise awareness.

Aurobindo Ghosh earlier a revolutionary leader turned into path of spirituality and raising nationalism rooted in ancient ethos. It was not luck that wisdom descended upon him rather he chose that path.

In fact, the rise of middle class intelligentsia during freedom struggle was result of exposure to ideas like liberty, equality, fraternity, no taxation without representation and unalienable rights of life and property. Spread of newspaper, press and literature accelerated it. It was no wonder that Britishers wanted to suppress press (consider Press Censorship by Viceroy Lytton for instance).

It is said that our constituent assembly members were wise enough to draft such a constitution with a fine balance of rigidity and flexibility and providing safeguards for checks and balances and strengthening individual rights. It was not due to merely importing ideas of western liberal nation-states but active realization of needs of common public through participation in several mass movements. and having an in-depth understanding of repression of Indian soul to find utterance.

Gandhiji even gave a Talisman, whenever in doubt think of the most vulnerable person you met and check if your action will be of any good for them. This shows how one can practise wisdom in their daily life.

Relevance today

Having established the importance of enquiry, reform spirit, debate, dialogue, exposure to new ideas, hardwork and perseverance to remove ignorance, we examine the relevance for our present times.

Today, the world faces polycrisis from climate change, conflicts, food insecurity, debt vulnerability etc. They call for active intervention by all agents - governments, market forces and ~~stat~~ civil society. But the ignorance that free hand of market would bring equilibrium on its own or that science would find a solution reeks of trivialization akin to leaving vulnerable people upto fate.

Thus, to gain wisdom to fight these challenges there should be a whole of society approach that promotes dialogue and diplomacy and a leadership that sees world

as a family and its future as combined future of humanity. Forums like Think 20, Religion 20, Women 20, Energy 20 are marquee initiatives in that sense. India can provide the right leadership as it also walks the talk on wisdom for benefit of inclusive growth and shared prosperity. Consider for example initiatives like Vaccine Maitri, operation Dost, humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.

When leaders lead the change and nudge others towards social behavioural change, common men follow their footsteps. As Bhagwad Gita says in Shloka 3:21 'Yat Yat Akhrita Shreshtha, Tad Tad Avataro Jatah'.

At an individual level, one should always have an inquisitive mind and spirit and enquiry. They can follow the fundamental duty under Ashika 5A(i) to always strive towards excellence in all

spheres so that nation continuously arises.
And follow the footsteps and words of our
leaders like vivekananda to gain wisdom -

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"Arise, Awake and stop not
untill the goal is Reached".

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