

The Future of *Homo sapiens*

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Introduction

We live in a time of accelerated growth of Mind, Energy, Space and Time—MEST. Mother Earth carries 8 billion youthful population (with 6.37 billion Smartphone Users!). Our youths require nurturing and proper grooming to meet the paradigm-shifts ahead. In the context of our current behavioural excesses, Bertrand Russell had observed: ‘*Homo sapiens* or human beings are the cruellest animals on planet earth.’ Are we in the last lap of existence?

100 years of growth in the 20th century is equivalent to 25 years of technological progress in the 21st. Swami Vivekananda had wishfully stated, ‘The eyes of the whole world are now turned towards this land of India for spiritual food; and India has to provide it for all the races. Here alone is the best ideal for mankind; Western scholars are now striving to understand this ideal which is enshrined in our Sanskrit literature and philosophy...’.(*C.W.* Vol. 3, p. 138.) Post 1947, virtues have subsided. In lieu of immortality only *immorality* prevails. Primarily, we have lost the power of introspection. The look ‘within’ factor is missing in our nurturing processes. We are on a more robust life-trip of looking outward, the typical ‘*mera-mera/mine-mine*’ trip for survival. We have made a 360 degree turn away from Swamiji’s counsel: ‘the true secret of evolution is the manifestation of the perfection which is already in every being’.

It is difficult to imagine now that even in the 15th /16th centuries, humans in Europe were still bathing in huge community bathtubs only *once* in a year which led to the rhetorical expression ‘don’t throw the baby out with the (dirty) bath-water’. The French Revolution ushered in the ideals of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. Rationalist European thinkers subsequently initiated some positivism in Western culture but discarded Fraternity which stands for brotherhood. And this has been the cause of post-war conflicts, with overtones of brutal hegemony.

We moved into wars, cold and hot, in Korea, Vietnam, Cuba; in Kuwait, Libya, Afghanistan and now Ukraine. We are in states of sustained unconscious or conscious *incompetence*. Competent community behaviours are now riddled with dissonance. We are no longer in sync with Nature. Over the decades since 1947, the advice of our sages for enhanced consciousness (*Chaitanya*) has faded. Indians in particular and world citizens in general are yet to resurrect that powerful force known as ‘human cooperation’. Mental poverty, sans ethics and morals, looms large in a world smitten by machine-learning processes. Vested human interests control matter, space and time but surely not the elusive universal energy.

The concepts of Sociology Ethology, Ethnology are all being redefined under the global umbrella of Artificial Intelligence in the 21st century. Our lives are ‘adulterated’ or refined with the new 24x7 inspiration

from ‘data religion’. It is an issue of either managing the future or simply accepting whatever emerges in the hurly-burly of national development. As we fiddle with the latest Smartphone technology, community best practices take a back seat. Instant gratifications are more important for self-development. This is the nature of our GloCal governance.

We are forced to live in profound states of unconscious and conscious incompetence. The latter category is dangerous because such persons ‘know’ but *will not act to rectify the errors*. The present century confronts us with a choice—Mischievous Intelligence or Enhanced Consciousness. Science is captivated with Intelligence (*Chetana?*) while Vedanta emphasizes Consciousness (*Chaitanya*). We have entered an era in which most humans look outside and few look within.

In India we are half-baked products of two socio-political epochs—one marked by the Macaulay Act of 1935 and the other, by the emergence of our post-1947 sacred Constitution. Given our post-1947 largely intuitive ‘*conscious incompetence*’ levels, we smack of relative cognitive dissonance in the emerging reality of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Much like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, AI is leading us toward nanobots and brain implants. Billions of global ‘Useless Class’ do not yet realise their state of suspended animation. Brute Forces control market forces and The End is almost near.

In the current scenario, with the community being relegated to the background amidst abundant super-imposed products and life-styles (wants over needs), the struggle between Intelligence and Human Consciousness carries more significance as we race toward extinction.

Clearly we have overcome many hurdles in advanced societies—healthcare, hunger, education. The World Population scaled 8

billion on 15th Nov 2022. But there is yet a missing link that we fail to fathom altogether.

The fact is 91% of India’s current population will live beyond 2045—whether as Cyborgs or Techno Humans we do not know. In 2023 India has 349 million in the age group of ‘0 to 14’ years; 232 million in the ‘15 to 24’ early working age bracket and 550 million in the ‘25 to 54’ bracket of prime working age category.

The GoI/State Governments need to have a plan ready at hand to ensure that the current 349 million (0 to 14 yr) nascent Indian children begin to consciously understand modern survival challenges in the course of their coming of age.

India needs to ensure that the current early working age, 232 million (15-24 yrs) + primary working age, 550 million (25-54 yrs) do not abdicate their responsibilities. These 800 million seniors in early and primary working age brackets owe a debt to the nation: wiring the people toward ‘productivity’ for the community. Will such ‘productivity’ be confined to creating great sportspersons? Stadiums may be filled 24x7 with cricket, baseball, football, tennis and other sports activities to keep the huge Useless Class in abeyance and in a state of somnambulism. But I envisage Nature to have already carved a way forward.

An incomprehensible implusive scenario is emerging. A minimum 600 million ‘Useless Class’ may have to be tamed into submission as the manufacturing and service sector blossoms primarily with AI. If Government servants continue to lack vision and relegate accountabilities as they presently do with their responsibilities, how can the citizens self-train and mentor themselves?

India in particular may have a few irksome issues. The psychological maturity levels of an aspiring youthful population of 1

billion may not be easily achieved unless induced community activities are emphasized. Given AI intrusions, developing societies are confronting unparalleled predicaments with micro-management of community issues. The indolent media, however, is not highlighting the real issues. No one is demanding evaluation or reviews. Nature has now worked out a techno-human alternative through human intelligence.

What I am trying to put across is an idea of the reality of the failure of human societies in innovating and adapting to changes in behaviourally activated organized communities. Changes will become painful, difficult and maybe deadly as man is not thus inclined.

My wish-list involving concept of Integrated Community Behaviour or ICB Hubs is certainly not impracticable, given our technical and human capital capabilities. ICB Hubs shall be functional within domains of Centres of Excellence. They shall convert the 3Ms (Men, Money, Materials) into a workable model under mandated ICB Hub Code of Conduct.

Here our cool, calm and collected persons of tomorrow can and *must* resolve issues with quantum state-of-the-art processes. These involve autonomous analytics, edge computing, 5G and 6G Deep Learning under AI/ML compatible with the highest state of human existence. I apprehend, should AI eclipse human intelligence by 2040s, there may be social chaos which Dr Kalam had feared. The struggle between Brute Forces and the Forces of Reason may become antagonistic. An era of dysfunctional Singularity will be saturated with intelligent processes and knowledge. The battle for control of Singularity may become mind-boggling.

Nature has been a leveller. Once, millions of years ago, the fixed interior milieu in life bodies became the perfect sync

for existence to sustain, Nature wished higher brain activity to lead toward the higher form of life. But our infatuation with sensory gratifications, greed and graft could never trigger the higher human brain activities. Vedanta tells us, the Unknown is knowable as it resides ‘within’ each human life. Nature has been advising us through her indirection. We ignored her and so now she has another Meta Plan.

The road map

Nature has now created the road map for her integrated solution in perpetuity—at least till some other vicious life-form emerges millions of years later to disrupt her projected trajectory.

We have to seriously ask ourselves which side we are on for a relatively ‘higher’ form of survival—as *mischievous* intelligence or as pure *unadulterated* consciousness. Nature carries even more infinite capabilities than are available to our sub-normal developed brains. I believe she is altering the course of evolution with the inevitability of AI eclipsing HI shortly. Evolution through indirection creates distinct capabilities to evolve to the next stage. This phenomenon has been forever occurring in Nature.

Functional ICB Hubs are *not* a hackneyed wish-list. These must be operational under logical and penetrating wisdom of algorithms—created by the finest human minds from the younger generations that manage the high decibel AI Matrices.

Nature gave us a few centuries for developing relative conscious realisation and we failed. Nature seems to be now conveying her message: ‘*I gave you all the time to do the rest for yourselves. You failed. So I will now create a newer capability to evolve into the next stage.*’

Mā Sarada, Ānandamoyee Mā and Mother Teresa were rare influential persons

who transformed lives. But we never introduced even an iota of their values into our community living patterns. Appropriate social practice always demands proactive 'look within'. Instead we absorbed the western values forsaking the principle of brotherhood in-built in our ethos.

The Roman Empire, Mayan Civilisation, Mesopotamia (Iraq), the Easter Islands (Polynesian Civilisation) are few examples of earlier collapsed civilisations. With current quantum inflection by AI technology and given our survival woes, is our civilization now on the verge of a different type of morbid collapse?

Mankind has rarely understood the teachings of the great sages that chimed in with Nature. Today, so-called secular forces condemn religiosity to further complicate issues for natural living in communities. We thus ignore the essence of being spiritual!

Our ruling elites, hell-bent on perpetuating their hegemony at any cost, weaned us away from Divinity. What is Divinity? We were not made to comprehend that the light waves, the electron and proton waves 'also consist of knowledge', to quote Swami Ranganathananda (*Spiritual Life of the Indian People*). The deities and the sanctum sanctorum in temples are mere physical substances. Nature and man are both divine.

The Indian education system and the socio-political contradictions arising out of Macaulay's Education system induced the post-1947 Indian rulers to sustain a divide and rule policy of a different kind. They made people see through the prism of their senses. We forgot to see the world as Divine: '*Ayam Ātman Brahma*' (This Self is Brahman). My point is, Nature (Universe, including Mother Earth with all life-forms) is resplendent with Quantum Knowledge of its

own kind of which humans are but a small particle.

With general socio-economic conditions going out of control in 2023 and non-reversible environmental degradations, we are at a loss to understand how to wriggle out of this Catch-22 dilemma. But Nature is far smarter with her intentions. The structure of universal nature is such that mankind's current problems are like a deflated tyre. She is fixing it already. My logic takes me to the emergence of man-made AI/ML technology as Nature's solution. She will do away with the human physical form. Human life cannot sustain itself in current traumatic physiological conditions. Through our human intelligence Nature is scaling the highest platform when patterns of matter and energy in the universe shall become saturated with far more important intelligent processes and knowledge.

We live in times that are changing when forces of reason are stymied. These times may consider it blasphemous to even ask, 'Who am I?' in the Upanishadic way. We are definitely in a *Techno-Moral Gridlock*.

There is certainly something more happening. In our daily lives we are perennially confusing the *right and wrong*. Being modern is to flaunt one's techno gadgets and accessories in melodramatic conversations. Unfortunately our education processes have ignored the more sublime nature of human development. Our teachers are Mr and Ms Know-Alls who do not know that they know nothing. They excel in imparting rote-learning.

The *Gita* is an eternally imperishable store-house of wisdom applicable to all ages. It enables rational humans to reconcile antithetical consciousnesses and dogmas not because we can but because WE MUST. We are actually confirming we are no longer

rational. Modern technology has made us look at life from primarily organic perspectives and not cerebral ones. Such is the ‘new normal’ in the 21st Century

Science is variously overpowering human behaviours all over the world. We have lost alignment with *brahmavidyā* (metaphysics) and *yogashāstra* (ethics). Now Nature is slowly reasserting herself.

The undeclared silent war between Intelligence and Consciousness began with the Industrial Revolution. Trans-humanism is already emerging as a more Capable Capability! Sci-fi writer Asimov (1920-1992) had submitted decades ago, ‘when the 1st trans-human intelligence is created and launches itself into recursive self improvement (modes), a fundamental unpredictable discontinuity is likely to occur.’ This has begun and we don’t know what it is.

It is apparent that to scale the next capability levels we need to realise that the manner in which we have evolved till date is not our true human dimension at all. There is something beyond Man the Known that Kant had also identified in his wisdom. Vedanta, unknown to Kant, has always asserted that this ‘Unknown’ is not *unknowable*. Why? It is your own self. It is not a thing to be known. ‘You are the knower, the Infinite One’. You are NOT an object; but the eternal subject, ever free. The same ‘Brahman’ resides within and in the Universe. This is the essence of Spirituality.

Failure of modern polity and governance

Luckily, my Baby Boomers’ generation has literally lived in eight different decades, two different centuries (when the world almost collapsed with false Y2K apprehensions!) and experienced two different millennia. Given our current

quasi-evolved consciousness platforms, it is now proven that our education systems since 1947 had less to do with *Man-making* and much more to do with *Man-breaking*. Something surely went horribly wrong with our tryst with destiny!

As if to counter such status quo in different socio-economic systems of global/local governance, Mother Earth has decided that the present laggard approaches are unsustainable. There is a huge ‘as-is’ and ‘to-be’ gap in almost everything humans undertake. And I, for one, believe Mother Earth and Nature carry more saturated knowledge than us petty humans.

Hence I believe and welcome the inevitability of the Kurzweilian ‘Singularity’. The pace of technological change will shortly be so rapid, its impact so deep, that human life will be irreversibly transformed. This is the true nature of 21st Century destiny. We are just spiralling out of orbit. In the aftermath of Data Religion and Techno-Humanism, we are already tiny chips under the umbrella of a giant techno-data system.

We need to introduce processes for *expanded mind thinking* under newer Quantum Computers systems. Could ‘Integrated Community Behaviour Hubs’ be the *only* solution to ensure discipline before human bodies disintegrate? Or does the problem remain with the Brute Forces among us?

Contextually, Eli Goldratt’s book *The Goal* guides us toward identifying and leveraging systems of constraints based on convergence, consistency and respect. But are we any longer sensitive to Convergence or have we, as a race, gone beyond redemption?

We have under-utilized our brains. From common citizen to ministers, from local leaders to administrators and educators

(barring a few like Dr APJ Kalam and Dr Shetty) we have literally cut the branch we have sat upon.

‘Brain is the centre point of our future’ asserted Madam MB Moser, winner of 2022 Noble Prize for Physiology. In 1906 her illustrious predecessor, who had won the Nobel Physiology Prize, Santiago Ramon y Cajal, had observed, ‘the brain is a world consisting of a number of unexplored continents and great stretches of unknown territory.’

In such extraordinary circumstances, is it too late for Swamiji’s guidance on self-development to be drilled into our lives under ICB Hubs as basic management lessons? After all what are basic managerial skills but another form of brain-based learning! As a race we must retrain ourselves with pragmatism at the root of which will be ethics and morals—which are the springboard of empathy. Einstein was right—there is no shortage of money with people; there is shortage of happiness.

By the end of 2020s, technology will have fully mastered biology including human intelligence to create the Trans-Human. Given our excessive exposure to wars, cruelties and domination, world citizens at community levels have been kept in total darkness on the patterns of human developmental capabilities! The intelligent brute forces have stunted world citizens’ ability to fully understand their inner potentials.

An emerging probability

Experts predict AI=HI by 2030s and AI>HI by 2040s. What will happen around the 2040s when our current 91% Indian population *may* have survived? Ray Kurzweil affirms nanobots will be implanted in human brains by 2030s. This will greatly raise the level of intelligence or consciousness. The emergent Trans-Human Man will then have

abilities to resolve current insurmountable problems with amplified intelligence.

Swami Ranganathanandaji writes in his pamphlet, *Man the Known and Man the Unknown* that Nature as God has constructed this human system with many powers, still it has a major defect. What is the defect? It is that man’s senses and mind are too outgoing in their disposition. ‘Our self-existence has rendered the senses so defective that we go outward, and hence we see the external and not the internal self. Only some wise men turn their eyes in and behold the Atman.’ I believe this weakness—the lack of awareness of the *Brahman* residing within man—is the curious reason why Singularity—the merger of Human Intelligence and (AI)Technology—becomes inevitable.

Dr Ray Kurzweil, Futurologist/Computer Scientist frightfully but adventurously portrays the inevitable merger of humanity with technology before 2050. Our minds and intelligence that we are so arrogant about in this life will for practical purposes merge with the universe particles. We won’t just decompose; we shall fade away!

But what happens to the billions of Useless Class that shall continue to survive in this interim period before we fade away as human bodies?

In his three books Harari talks variously and at length on the emergence of the post-liberal society. He appears to indicate emergence of a System where the System ‘shall know me better than my own self; it will make important life decisions for me’. Harari makes very interesting reading. FB, IOT, Twitter etc already know more about me than my own self.

However, the future may not be adventurous for most. The mass of humans may survive as entirely downgraded inferior castes.

Our world will truly be wired to connect in a different context. Vastly expanded human intelligence, mainly non-biological, is likely to spread across the universe. Unconscious algorithms/technology with human intelligence (that may be intelligently managed by tiny ruling and mischievous elite) will signal dawning of the 1st Age of trans-human intelligence (Age of Aquarius!). The 'Unknown Man' Vedanta refers to will remain forever elusive.

A few future shocks

With rise in costs, medicine is already undergoing tremendous conceptual revolution. 20th Century medicines were aimed at healing the sick. But 21st Century medicines are aiming to upgrade the healthy. It will be recognised by the ruling elite that with rising costs it is better to focus exclusively on a handful of elite families that can remain healthy rather than on the masses. Such may be the precise paths of prioritization ahead.

These upgraded super humans (with requisite brain implants surely) shall be more important than millions of other citizens—the 'Useless Class' (Harari). Newer security needs will no longer be compelling the maintenance of large armies. Labour force participation rates will be issues of history because AI/ML shall produce.

Hence in the emerging scenario we may very well be treated by 'upgraded super humans' much as the Europeans treated our grandparents—as slaves! Can we convert the urgently needed humane ICB Hubs to trigger the internal self through more profound ways and means inconceivable to the emerging techno-human digital mind? But does this at all matter now when the end is almost near?

We already live in unstructured ICB Hubs where left hands do not know what

the right hands are doing. Within such matrices can we begin disaster management with corrective practices in our communities? History rarely shows any instance of voluntary change initiated within communities.

We have been unable to convert our sight into insight. Dr Kurzweil says our brains shall be connected to the IOT that will amplify intelligence. Enhanced humans shall resolve most of our world problems including climate conditions. He does seem to indicate that *Homo sapiens* shall become non-biological matter linked to the Universe.

Vedanta merging with techno-humanism?

Today we are much like what Bertrand Russell predicted in his time—we are going to factories and offices with flowers in our hand as offerings to the big machines/computers and saying to them 'Please make me a nut and bolt in your system'. Indeed we are transformed into quasi-humans already.

The Upanishadic mind created *Dhira*, the intelligent and patient man (of reason). It is extremely sad that in this techno-human paradigm shift, reason has taken a backseat in community sustenance. There is no need for our higher brains. Data Scientists now have all the intelligent information on running the world. Nanobots are ready. Demands for Brain Implants shall be on the rise!

To conclude, one would remember Shankara's commentary (A.D. 788-820) which is remarkable in its efficacy. His description of the Brahman/Reality turns on the idea that the entire world of manifestation is not real in itself; *just illusion*. It seems real only to those who live in *ignorance (avidyā)*. To be caught in this bondage is to endure unreal causal cosmic

processes. 21st Century *Homo sapiens* may aptly relate to this description. We live in illusion and ignorance.

Equally relevant are the concluding lines of Dr Radhakrishnan's Introductory Essay on the *Bhagavadgita*:

Ānanda is the limit of our development and we grow into it from the level of vijnāna. It belongs to the cosmic manifestation. The Absolute is not the *Ānandamaya ātmā*, not the divinised self. The pure Self is different from the five sheaths. When the purpose of the cosmos is reached, when the kingdom of God is established, when it is on earth as it is in heaven, when all individuals acquire the wisdom of spirit and are superior to the levels of being in which birth and death take place, then this cosmic process is taken over into that which is beyond all manifestations.

It is time to walk the path of *Ānanda* with deference. My Baby Boomer's generation has handed over the baton to the next generations. We are a generation of oldies with polished leather shoes and formal western clothes; always thinking of hierarchical structures. The world is now driven by an innovative Silicon Valley with its informality and flat structures on one hand and Big Power politics with secrecy and mistrust and misinformation on the other. Big powers are not Vedantists. They shroud their thrones in darkness and use monetary and trade policy as invisible weapons. Who knows what battles are fought in cyber space? So we must offer hope in our writings and conversations, never despair. As the older *Homo sapiens* seek the Ātman, let our younger members do a greater job than all that we ever tried to do! ■

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* This is an abridged version of the Surrendra Paul Memorial Lecture delivered at the Institute on 28.12.22. Professor Sengupta is an acknowledged academician, author and management consultant.