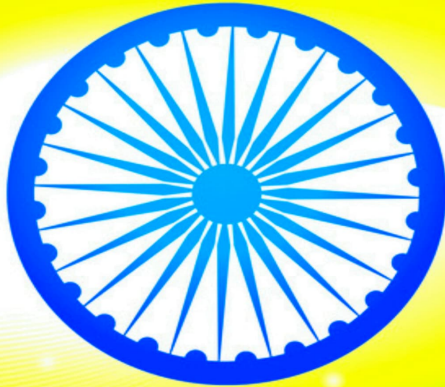


An Introduction of

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Technology: An Era of Modern Values

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Introduction:

Technology and society or technology and culture refer to cyclical co-dependence, co-influence, co-production of technology and society upon the other (technology upon culture, and vice-versa). This synergistic relationship occurred from the dawn of humankind, with the invention of simple tools and continues into modern technologies such as the mobile and computer. The importance of stone tools, circa 2.5 million years ago, is considered fundamental in human development in the hunting hypothesis. It has been suggested, in *Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human*, that the control of fire by early humans and the associated development of cooking was the spark that radically changed human evolution.

With the advent of man on this planet started the ever moving wheel of science leading to the present scenario. Society's coming into existence is not a simple process in itself. The process was again steered by what we call today science. It was in itself a more complex and more complicated science than the invention of mobile phone or computer or internet. When people started living together in groups, it was the beginning of the age of science. Inventing printing press or making machines only is not the science. Making societies and laying down rules and policies in the early dawn of human history was a far greater science than the discovery of a new planet or invention of watch.

Ever since man started living in groups and making societies so that living in the savage world could be made possible, man started making some rules and regulation for the smooth running of the society. The then seers realized the impending dangers besetting the human society. The early thinkers, in a way, anticipated that without these guidelines human society, in the true sense of the term, would not survive for a long time. These rules and regulations, in the long run, laid the foundation of the system which we call the values of a society. We can say that Christian Adam and Eve or Manu Maharaj of Hindu Mythology or whosoever they were in the beginning of human history were great thinkers and that's why they could easily conclude that it would not be possible to keep man on the path of virtue on the basis of these guidelines only. They knew it quite well that with the passage of time when man would begin to understand the surrounding world, man would definitely be motivated by the forces of sex, anger, ego, greed, and attachment (Kam, krodh, mad, lobh, moh). In such a state of affairs these guidelines would miserably fail to check the greed of man. But one thing that we must keep in our mind is that the seers never forbade us from making suitable changes in the value system they formed in the beginning.

This realization made the early thinkers adopt those methods which would inevitably keep the greed of man within boundaries. And then emerged what we call religion. In religion we are taught what to do and what not to. Religion spurs man to fight the beastly feelings within him. Our scriptures contain discussions related not only with the other world, the life after death, immortality of soul and so on but also discussions regarding our behavior with the people and the world around us. In religion we are told what to eat, how to eat, when to eat. Although we know very well that it has nothing to do with religion, it is merely a way of keeping us healthy. This wisdom was basically the fruit of their ages' long experience.

Religion is such a powerful tool that nobody dares violate the rules laid down in the scriptures and go against them. That is why man was superstitious when the mysteries of

Undoubtedly, technology has made life easy and worth living. But it is human tendency to see the world through nostalgic mirror. We, who enjoy this world in the modern age with the help of technology, are not prepared to accept the changes that are taking place. We want to take resort to technology to enjoy the beauty of this grand new world which is gradually emerging before us. But at the same time we wish to stick to the same values.

Technology has taken over our lives and as a consequence values are definitely deteriorating in the modern age is what is generally believed today. Whenever the society goes wrong, we immediately find a scapegoat to blame for. But we should remember that change is the law of nature. The old order is always replaced by the new one. But what we feel to be the deterioration of values is not exactly the deterioration, it is rather the evolution. Because society, in every age, finds or rather develops its own values.

We should not forget that there has always been and will always be a reaction against the existing order of things. Some reformer or saint comes and finds the existing order corrupt. There was a time when slavery was practiced in one way or the other in most of the countries. Even the great Greek philosophers justified it. But some reformer like Lincoln, comes and fights to eliminate this evil practice. And today we criticize slavery system. In the same way there was *sati prathain* India and Raja Ram Mohan Rao fought against it and today it is criticized. This is the system of the society. Thus we see that the values sometimes differ. What was supposed to be good in the age of great Socrates and Plato and Tulsidas is being avoided in this so called degrading age. If we are getting rid of the old evils like slavery or *sati pratha*, this is all due to development of science. So we cannot ignore the role that technology is playing in reshaping, redesigning and restructuring the human society.

Whenever we talk about technology, the much debated topic that attracts our attention immediately is the negative effect of internet on the modern youth through pornography. This topic has received such an unprecedented importance in our mind that it appears that the youth of today has nothing to do except watching porn movies and indulging in sexual activities. But it is not so. Today we are blaming pornography for misleading the modern youth. But we must not forget that in the past in India and everywhere in the world there were and still are brothels and people used to and still do frequent them without any fear.

In some countries prostitution is even legalized. And the brothels or legal prostitution did not affect our culture in the least. In the same way pornography will be left behind when something new will come. Is it our frustration that we are not young enough to enjoy those aspects of technology which the younger generation is enjoying or we wish to be self-made mentor of the society? Otherwise good and bad had existed in this world ever since the creation of the universe. Both had and will always have their importance and scope. There was and will always be a tussle between the two forces to replace the other. And the humanity will emerge victorious in this battle between the forces of good and bad, as it has happened in the past.

At the same time we should not forget that man is not merely a thinking animal. No doubt man has a developed level of consciousness but at the same time man, as I have already said, is a pleasure seeking animal. So this desire for pleasure keeps man on the path of material progress and prosperity. So the technological advancement in every age always brings some changes which evolve its own values.

The development of science has not taken us away from God nor does it impart us more information about the existence of god than our forefathers had but it is certainly taking us away from those superstitions which were the source of corruption in religion in the past. Priests used to cheat innocent and god fearing people in the name of god, religion and the life to come. But when science revealed the mysteries of the universe and gave man its proper place in the universe, man was not guided, as earlier it used to be, merely by blind faith. Man started applying reason in every field, and even in matters of religion. For a priest this kind of

nature and the world were unexplored. Before the advancement of science we used to do many things simply because it is said in the scriptures. But with the advancement of science and technology the mysteries of nature are being explored and man is being given his due place in the universe which was earlier occupied by the gods. The scientific progress has eradicated many fatal and disfiguring diseases which were supposed to be the curse of God for our evil doings in our previous birth. This is the magic of science which is commonly criticized for destroying our values and value system.

When I am using the word early thinkers or rishis or munis, I mean the people who were virtuous and whose sole motive was the welfare of human race. And for me here the word 'man' represents the society as a whole. Individually, I do not mean to say that, man is a creature without values. What I mean is that every man has a potentiality for values, but we can neither say nor can we expect that every man will try to manifest his virtues because when we do good, evil is present with us. Basically man is a pleasure seeking animal. But the thing that distinguishes man from animal is the level of consciousness. Since man's virtue lies in living on the higher scale of consciousness which is the beginning of the establishment of values, man has always tried to prove this. But we must never hope for a perfect society. We shall do harm rather than good if we try to imagine perfect things in a perfect world. Society as a whole has never been nor will ever be perfect. So we should not look forward for a virtuous society. Rather we should try to find out the middle path, without caring for the virtues or the vices, for the smooth functioning of the society.

There are two kinds of values - intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic values are absolute. They are not subject to time, space and conditions. Their inevitability is always acknowledged in human society. They are good in themselves and do not depend on other things for their goodness. Whereas extrinsic values are relative and their goodness, on many occasions, is decided by other things also. Thus we can say that there are certain actions which are good in themselves without any attachment to other things. Truth, honesty, equality, justice, freedom etc. are intrinsic values and they do not depend on any external reward for their goodness. Whereas extrinsic values like our responsibility towards our parents, student-teacher relation, relations within the family, our attitude towards elder and so on are relative values which are governed by time and space. The structure of value system propels human society to reach the goals of human existence.

If we impartially cast a glance at the history we will find that values have always changed from generation to generation. Every society frames its own values which differ from the values of the previous generation. So if we find different values in the modern world, it does not mean that society's values are deteriorating. They are simply evolving, not deteriorating. Older generation, mostly, think that society's values are deteriorating, because they're accustomed to look at the society and its values from the nostalgic spectacles. They think that the values which once we deemed good are losing their significance and vitality. They always wish to see the society as they found it and any change in the society and its set up is a sort of deterioration in the society and its values. The older generation sees two worlds - the one they found when they were young and the other that is gradually changing. So they feel the change sharp enough. But this is not the deterioration; rather it is the change and evolution which will definitely lead to something worthwhile.

When we see man driven by the forces of sex, anger, ego, greed, and attachment we should not think that man has become so in an instant. Man became a slave of all these forces with the passage of time. If we look at the human history we will find that the development of science and technology made life and living complicated. Life is now not as simple as it used to be in the past. The more complicated life grew, the more difficult it became to stick to the same old values. If life is so much complicated in this age, what it would like be in future, we cannot say.

behavior is a kind of deterioration in religion and religious values. But thanks to technology that man who is supposed to be the best creation of god is enjoying his superior position.

Whatever man is doing on this earth is for the betterment of mankind. Every new invention is criticized either in the name of morality or religion or environment or something else, if we are not able to make proper use of the new invention. We always find one or the other excuse to criticize technology. It is simply because we are not prepared to accept the changes and we cannot tolerate the modern youth enjoying those facilities which we ourselves missed. We always say that this progress will take us to the mythological great dissolution. But this great dissolution is again a myth and has nothing to do with reality. And if this great dissolution is a reality and has taken place in the distant past, how, then, this creation came into existence. If after the great dissolution creation is possible, then there will again be a creation when this present creation will be annihilated by the so called harmful technology.

We should take up the holy task of imparting values to the youth. We should admit that character promotion is not something like forcing people to do that and not to do that in the *talibanifashion*. Our actions decide our character. Arid until and unless one has an option to choose between good and bad, how can it be said that one is virtuous or vicious. If we have a choice, our choice will establish our character. So let us give the youth all the possible options and let it decide its course. The new generation is intelligent enough and knows very well what is good and what is bad. We must have faith in the new generation and its potentiality. Because our age contains a great deal of good, perhaps, as much good as any other age. We need only faith in it. The new age will definitely develop its own suitable values.

Technology has undoubtedly created some problems, but these are manageable. Recently human society has come to regard the advance of science and technology with a certain element of fear and trepidation. So there often arises a voice to ban so many things but we fail to realize that solutions to the problems we are facing can come only through further use and development of science and technology because science is the only tool that can solve the problems it has created. Francis Bacon writes in his essay "Of Studies", "... for they (books) teach not their own use, but that is a wisdom without them (books) and above them (books), won by observation." So how to use technology is a wisdom that technology will not teach us. We will have to learn how to make use of the technology for the betterment of the society and mankind. And this wisdom will come gradually and through experience.

The progress of our society is generated by the progress of science and technology and the progress of science and technology is generated by our desire for pleasure. As I have already said man is a pleasure seeking animal so all his actions are stimulated by his desire for pleasure. None of us with a few exceptions are wholly virtuous or vicious, rather a mixture of good and bad with a tendency towards goodness. So our leanings towards goodness which is the beginning of realization of values and virtues will always guide us for the betterment of the society.

Society's need for being able to meet out the needs of people and be available everywhere resulted in the research and development of technology which gradually led us to mobile phone and internet. They in turn influenced the way we live our lives. As with the passage of time the populace relied more and more on science to provide additional help and comfort, the role of science received unprecedented importance. Now in the 20th century when we depend on science for everything, we cannot think of going back to the age of horses. "We cannot get rid of machinery, for the simple reason that, in the process of getting rid of it, we should be forced to get rid of that moiety of the human race whose existence on this planet is made possible only by the existence of machines. machinery has resulted in the trebling of the population of the industrial countries within a century and a half. A return to

horses and handicrafts means a return, through starvation, revolution, massacre and disease, to the old level of population."² So the solution of the problem lies in the use of technology itself:

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