

Are We Well Prepared for the Challenges of the Future?

Every day I see more and more of my friends getting interested in science fiction. We like to watch movies set up in 2050. Future fascinates us.

When these screenwriters write these movies, they are on a flight of imagination. They are telling a story, exaggerated to take us on a flight of fantasy and climaxing in a blockbuster fashion. It is sheer entertainment!

I wonder, what would these screenwriters write about India 20 years from now? How would they depict India? Will there be cars flying? Will there be robots in the streets? Or will they still get inclined to show immense population, poverty, dirty surroundings, malnourished people, cattle on the roads, snake charmers? What do we think, we would show if we made a fictional attempt?

We sometimes joke that Americans will be in line for getting a Green Card equivalent for India. Is it going to happen? What is the basis of this thought? If it's the present development then how sustainable is it? If it is sustainable then what makes it sustainable and if it is not, then what can we do about it? Is the market growing because of our efforts, changed policies or is it just that we are at a point of time in history that we are a young nation with cheap educated labor? To show that these fears are concrete think about the following – How will Indian industry and development react if we lose the major share of Back Office Providers to Brazil, Russia, Ireland, Poland, China, Ukraine or may be Zambia? Yes, Zambia too. Recently, I was reading a talk given at Sloan School of Management, MIT – *Why not Zambia*, where they were comparing that Zambia may be an even cheaper option. Will the bubble burst or are we in a good enough shape to sustain such a challenge?

We must plan future of India. We must be aware of these challenges. We must not be pompously lost in present hints of success. Who has not seen markets crash? In US, there is an economic crash every decade. How are we prepared to handle such situations? If things like this happen, we should not be moving 20 years behind, when we should be accelerating ahead. These questions are valid and must be raised, debated and reasoned. Plans of development should be laid down with a watchful eye on the changes in the world.

I would imagine that our leaders must be thinking about all these. But, I think whole nation should be involved. After all, they do not really tell us what they are thinking. If we do not question them, they may just forget about it. We should question them.

Recently, I read a report of the committee on India vision 2020. With my due regards to the people who prepared it, there is one thing that bothered me. On the last line of first page itself the report says – In 1835, even Lord Macaulay, the British historian and politician had to admit before the British Parliament: “I have traveled across the length and breadth of India and I have not seen one person who is a beggar, who is a thief. Such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such caliber... the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage...” REALLY, in 1835! I would be happy to know this, but I doubt if it is true. Is it a historical fact? Then, I would like to

validate it. Unfortunately, I do not believe that if something is reiterated on the web, it makes it true. To me this statement has no basis. It is a hoax. I may be wrong, and I will be happy to know that I was wrong. However, I am not going to buy this, if this is merely a feel good propaganda.

Such things are the basis of my fear. We Indians tend to create a feel good euphoria around us and forget the facts. This is exactly why, I call for an awakening to understand the dynamics that are governing the present progress in our nation and lay strong foundations to cope with any challenges in future.

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