

Test 2320

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History never repeats itself, but it does often rhyme

In world history, there has been many debates but the fall of Roman Empire has generated deliberation even today. However, it is mostly agreed that the Roman Empire fell because of weaker leaders engrossed in merry making, identity politics, crash of economy and others.

However, it is also agreed that Roman Empire continued to evolve post its decline into the Byzantine Empire, Ottoman Empire (Sultanate of Rum (Rome)) and eventually the British empire and today's USA hegemony.

The underlying causes of fall from grace are highly ~~simi~~ different but the deeper reasons are the same. Thus, they show huge ~~also~~ similarity with the past.

In this context, the above quote of Mark Twain is highly relevant. It was quoted by Mark Twain as a counter to Hegelian and Marxist notion of cyclical history. For Marx, 'History repeats itself, first as a tragedy, then as a farce'. However, Twain being the evergreen poet, brought out this beautiful analogy of poems and their rhyming, to the context. Hence, in this essay, there will be deeper dive into the technicalities of the idea.

### Cyclical nature of History

'Bad times create strong men.  
Strong men create good times.  
Good times create weak men.  
Weak men create bad times?'

Since the beginning of man, the nature of men has not changed much. Man continues

to exhibit some qualities of fear, love, jealousy, ambition, compassion & others. As a result human behaviour, despite the gap of time & space has been widely similar. Thus, despite the change in socio-economic and cultural context, historical events often have ~~the~~ widely similar connotation to them. They are not completely same but display significant overlap vis-a-vis the philosophy and reason.

The Hindu notion of cyclical time also supports this view. A Time is divided into Satyayug - Treta yug, - Dwapar Yug and Kali Yug. And the endless cycle begins of time. Though, each cycle is similar but it is not the same. The events or the history ~~may~~ <sup>does</sup> not repeat but it shows same underlying patterns.

## Pattern Recognition

'The Prince, rather being a philosopher, should be a student of history and psychology'

- Machiavelli  
(Book: Prince)

Just as the rhyme of a poem depicts the lyrical pattern, the events of history denote patterns in terms of human behaviour, adaptation, response and even the end result. Hence any society, nation or even man who wishes to reach the pinnacle of success should not forget his history. For eg. In case of UPSC exam, an aspirant needs to identify the pattern in previous question papers to chart out his study. Without this personal study, he cannot hope to cover the vast syllabus and successfully

clear the examination.

The identification of the underlying currents of history requires deep multi-dimensional thinking based on principle first principles. Application of other fields of knowledge like economics, sociology, anthropology is also beneficial. Additionally, the bias need to be minimized to get an appropriate logical conclusions.

It is very similar to an Artificial Intelligence algorithm that just takes in data, uses mathematical modelling and brings out the output. Such dispassionate study and analysis can lead to better recognition of rhyming of History.

For eg. Before any spurt of economic activity there is an increased spending on Research and development of new technology and adequate skilling.

Thus, if Industrial and Information revolution could be achieved via the same underlying ~~principle~~ principle, then it will help in the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution also.

### Utility of Rhymes

'What good is wisdom, if it does not bring profit to the wise?'

- Greek saying.

The present is future history and the future is the new present. Thus, if one wishes to ride the tides of history successfully, he needs to know how the tides flow.

The main objective to study history is to understand the collective wisdom of ages and utilize it for the benefit of today. History not only binds people to

their past ancestors and heritage but it also prepares one for the future. And a better preparation ensures better chances of success.

'Those who forget history are doomed to repeat it'

- George Santyana

Civilizations may rise and fall but this poem continues. And if the past depicts these rhymes, then the present as well as the future will also depict these rhymes. Thus, history acts as a source of insurance for future and its study is the premium paid to gain its services.

The defeat of Prithviraj Chauhan happened at Taran because he forgot the deeds of Bappa Rawal, Saktaditya Muktapida for their role

in. Arab Invasion and its defeat. Similarly, Rana Sangha ignored the lessons of Tarrain to get defeated at Khanwaha. But Chhatrapati Shivaji and Peshwa Bajirao remembered the history and hence were victorious.

### Corollary thinking

So far, it is observed how the study of past is beneficial to find out underlying patterns. A skillful poet ~~try~~ tries to compose poems which rhyme. But it is the master who can compose poems which make deeper meaning without rhyming. Thus, what should a person do if there is no such rhyme in history?

The earliest men and women of the earth too faced the same question.

The explorers of Renaissance too faced the same question. And Mahatma Gandhi faced the same question - How to defeat the undefeatable?

In these times, only conviction and strong souls are able to change their fortunes. Machiavelli, too had said, that sometimes fortune hits as torrential storms. But a courageous and strong willed person has the ability to turn the tides of fortune in his favour. This method of impressisation and innovation is the essence of human spirit. And this newness and independence to chart out new courses of history has been called by the philosopher Hannah Arendt as the 'true freedom'.

## Future history & Future present

In today's time, humans have begun to enter the new age. Advanced technology, economic welfare, access to wealth and comfort are at all time high. People are living longer than their past. Life is really good.

But just like all ages, certain challenges also exist. Environmental pollution, increased climate change, social unrest; gender disparity, wars and others. Some of these are timeless problems while some are the new age problems. So what does history tell now?

The most pertinent lesson given by history is that in the face of adversity, people should unite and don't.

leave anybody behind. People should fight with dedication and help fellow human beings and other living beings like animals.

Due to lack of development, past ages saw conflict as a solution but today conflict is a problem itself. The most timeless pattern of history is not the wars, kings and wealth but it is the empathy, compassion and kindness which built this civilization. There should be a fight against the challenges ~~and~~ and not the people as the whole world is bound by the common ancestry and history.

Thus, it is observed that history is never repeated for the gap of time and space is too great to generate the exact outputs. Additionally, the

variety of people, cultures and societies induce certain unique behaviours ~~and~~ within different people. As a result, the present life of people is due to different histories across geographies.

But in the spirit of 'Vaendhava Kutambakam', certain commonalities bind us. Despite different histories, certain stories, ideals and virtues bind the planet together. It can be either, the heroes, villains, idols and others. The physical manifestations are different but the internal reflections are the same. And in this spirit, it is true to conclude that History never repeats itself, but it does often rhymes.

Every man I meet is my master at some point, and in that I learn of him.

During the Scottish War of Independence of 14th century, Robert Bruce, the leader of Scottish forces was repeatedly defeated by English forces. Escaping the enemy, he took refuge in a cave. Tired of defeats, he was about end his life when he observed a spider attempting to go over the wall of the cave.

Robert Bruce observed that the spider was falling down continuously while climbing. However, the height he reached in the last attempt was increasing with new attempt. Finally, in a couple of hours, it was able to complete this task. This put Robert Bruce into thinking that if the spider could do it, so could he.

As a result, he reassembled his forces and went to battle again, this time defeating the English.

Every human meets around 70000 people in his life. ~~every~~ On an average, nearly a dozen different people interact with each human. This amount of exposure if properly used can give life changing direction to a person's life.

### Master & learner

'You cannot get intelligent from ~~the~~ other's intelligence but you can get wisdom from other's wisdom?'

The concept of master has been often looked at with stereotypes. It is imagined to be a rigid and strict individual, who punishes people for minor dis-cretions. He is not kind and very.

~~is~~ stubborn in his outlook. ~~But~~ But what exactly is a master?

A master or 'Guru', according to Aristotle, is a person who imparts virtue. Thus, any person who teaches how to be virtuous is a master. The Hindu Philosophy of 'Guru-Shishya Parampara' (Master learner tradition) refers to the influence of Guru on the student which teaches him the important 'Sanskaras' (Culture). It is the Guru who determines the period of study & the evaluation technique. Post that, the student is expected to give 'Gurudakshina' (Fee of teacher) according to his stature. But in the age of internet, algorithms & technology, why is master important?

### Relevance of master

It is true that technology has boosted.

information dissemination but has it  
taught imparted practical knowledge?  
Has it imparted how to handle life and the  
people?

The answer is a resounding 'No.' The master  
plays a key role in the life of an individual.  
He teaches the person of the intricacies of  
real world, beyond the traditional education.  
He informs on how to handle people and  
relationship. It is true that the machines  
give ~~us~~ people information, it is the  
master who helps in understanding and  
applying the information. The master teaches  
humility and builds the character.

For eg. In Buddhist texts, there is the story  
of a poor orphan of Mithila. One day, he  
saw the richest person of city commenting  
that it is easy to get rich. Pointing to a  
dead mouse, he said that if a person wishes

he can get rich from even the rich mouse. The orphan picked up the mouse thinking that if the rich man had said, there would be logic in it. He later sold it to a person who wanted food for his rat. From the money, he purchased water which he sold to wearry travellers. Slowly and slowly he became the richest man of the city. Thus, he gifted a golden mouse to his former master as Gurudakshina seeing that the man was intelligent and smart who could pick up just from his casual words, he married his daughter to him and declared him his successor.

Thus, the timelessness of master learner relationship is the key to a good life. This works even in the fast-paced modern world where meaningful interpersonal contacts have fallen.

## Contemporary Relevance

'While the student sees the stone, the sculptor sees the statue'.

In today's world, learning is mostly attributed to schools, colleges and on the job training. However, if a person attempts to learn from other people, he can save a lot of time and a lot of effort:

From other people, the person can pick up good habits, virtues, qualities, perception about things and overall outlook of life. For eg. If a person is in the regular company of a gym enthusiast, he will also pick up the habit of being fitness conscious.

Similarly, the best way to learn about a job or the business is to talk and learn from people with the same

occupation. No wonder that the prominent business communities of Baniyas, Trujaratis, Chettiars and others rarely interact with each, other.

It is said that ~~our~~ a human mind, though logical, is filled with biases. Thus, it imposes an artificial lens in approaching problems and life itself. This reduces the ability for creative thinking, risk taking and even overall success.

Once upon a time, the best talent of the country used to go outside to earn, resulting in enormous brain drain. However, with success in startup ecosystem, people are more inclined to stay in India and try their luck. For eg. Today less than 5% of IIT Graduates are taking up foreign placements. Thus, if

just a few interactions can do such, wonders (Making India the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest startup ecosystem), what could a billion, interactions do?

### Cycle of Virtue

'Show me your closest friends, and I will show your future'

It is often said that, especially by the elders, to choose one's company carefully. Studies show that they were not wrong. Even in the previous example of IIT or equivalent colleges like BITS, NITs etc., the only decisive factor is company. The disproportionate success is achieved because the overall group is talented. Everyone learns from each other and everybody's success motivates the other to strive

for more.

Even the theory of post modernism of Foucault, Perrida and Lyotard says that every interaction exerts power over a person. This power is a very big determinant of person's behaviour, actions and attitudes. Thus, just a simple meet and greet can have a great effect on the person. But how can one learn in this era of short lived interactions?

When there is a will, there is a way

The process of learning from other people has become difficult due to reduction of time of interaction in the fast paced modern life:

However, the paramount quality here is reason. This will answer the question of 'what to learn?' from other

men. Additionally, it will help to filter good qualities from the bad.

For eg. If a person wants to learn programming from his colleague, reason will pick up the programming and not the chain smoking habit of the colleague. Reason is, thus, the sun which picks up water from a pristine lake as well as the gutter

'Every master was once a student'  
- Japanese Proverb.

The next important quality is humility. Socrates was not the wisest man because he knew everything. He was the wisest man because he knew that he didn't know anything. This builds up the humility to learn from every man you meet despite the stature. Here, the

picture of Arjun bowing before Lord Krishna during Bhagavad Gita recitation is a prime example how humility can lead to ultimate knowledge.

The third quality is inquisitiveness. If the mind is not inquisitive, it will not make the effort to learn.

'I am not a genius, I am just curious'

- Albert Einstein

However, all of the above qualities are not useful without a key skill i.e. interpersonal skills. This can involve communicative and comprehension skills. Additionally, it needs a high level of Emotional Intelligence.

The lack of interpersonal skills led to the situation where Duryodhan sat near the head of Lord Krishna while

Arjuna sat near his feet. Not only did Arjuna's side win Mahabharat, Arjuna received the ultimate knowledge of Dharma from Krishna himself.

In modern world, a nice word or two and polite talk can go a long way in learning something even if the interaction is not long.

### Future of Man

'Not everybody can become a great teacher but a great teacher can come ~~to~~ from anywhere'

The entire civilisation of man is built upon the task of learning from others. This intergenerational supply of skills, talents, knowledge, ideas and behaviours have put man at the supreme species of the earth.

Though even animals mimic each other behaviour, for better survival.  
But they do it mechanically without  
any understanding. Thus, they know the  
answer to 'how?' but not the 'why?'

Despite the lack of time with  
everybody, human fraternity has  
grown in the world. The breakdown of  
geography & various practices of society  
like racism ~~have~~ has widely been  
rectified. Due to globalization and  
spread of social media, people are  
much closer today.

However, this closeness will lead  
to tangible benefits only if meaningful  
and mutually beneficial interactions  
take place. And this development  
is only possible if every man treats other

as his master and, learns, from him.  
As Albert Einstein once said, 'Learning  
commences from birth and ends at  
death', human beings should strive  
for what Greek city states used to i.e.  
Eudaimonia (Human flourishing)