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Life must be understood backward  
But it must be lived forward

उम्मीदवार को  
इस हाशिये में  
नहीं लिखना  
चाहिए

Ramayana, arguably the most revered and respected scripture in Hinduism mentions that when Vanarsena reached the shore of Indian ocean in search of Ma Sita, they were perplexed with doubt that who can cross this mighty ocean?

Jamavanta and all came to consensus that none other than Lord Hanuman can do it. But for this firstly, he must be remembered about his past to make him understand his power. Then only, he could take this mighty task forward. Thereby Lord Hanuman understood everything and ultimately came to with good news about Sita mata!

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This anecdote is worth mentioning as it perfectly captures the essence that how one by understanding his past can even take mightiest task at hand in life.

But before delving any further a legitimate question here will be, why one should look into life backward? what effect do it plays on future?

The answer is simple because "past never pasts". Past is a permanent dimension of one's life. If life is a bicycle, then wisdom of past is the 'pedal' which moves life forward. Evidently, past plays a key role. understand this by example- If a student does not gets good marks in unit tests then by proper analysis & thorough understanding he can surely improve in future tests. Thereby past is important for its wisdom to correct future errs. But if society refuses to

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Value this wisdom and understanding,  
it will stop growing and will die, and  
what do we say to God of Death??

"Not Today"!

Thus, it is essential to see life  
backwards & live forwards. A supporting  
adage, (popular in Europe) - "Battle of  
Waterloo was won at playgrounds of  
Etons". It does not defies history but  
declares that Battle of Waterloo was  
won because of the character & underst-  
-anding developed by British soldiers in their  
past life. Similarly a Chinese proverb  
says "if you want to be successful in  
life, consult three old people". This  
essentially means understand the life  
backwards to get the wisdom that can  
take forward your life to fables!

This line of thought was echoed by  
Martin Luther King Jr. too, when he  
talked about his dream of transforming

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"Sweat[ing] land into heat of oppression"  
into ~~freedom~~ "oasis of freedom & justice".  
He pressed to view back in history  
on 1600, since first black slave came to  
shore to America, and understand the  
plight of black Americans and thereby  
embarra on this dream to carry forward  
this life.

Another humanitarian Stallwart -  
Nelson Mandela, when asked in his  
preident inauguration, despite all these  
years of suffering, what kept him going?  
His answer was simple; - "I am a master  
of my soul and captain of my ship", -  
through all hard times, we kept going by  
learning; learning from his mistakes &  
igniting the fire in him! But, what  
is that thing which actually makes  
our backward life so enriching for our  
future?

one possible answer may be that

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the experience we gain, it is the actual teacher. As every experience proves something even if it doesn't prove what we were expecting it proves something, But it does prove!

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In Indian context, an interesting aspect highlights importance of past in future. In Hinduism past is called - "Bhoot" - meaning ghost i.e. dead and buried. But Hinduism is indulged in worshipping dead & buried - Pitra, Shraadh etc. This highlights how even 'subconsciously' we as a society accord so much respect to past & evidences don't stop here, another could be 'Karmic cycle', etc.

Even Buddha, when once met the 'devious' dacoit - Angulimal. He told him - "I have stopped & so should you. Learn from your past and to attain 'dhamma' in future.

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Even our modern day Mahatma, Grandhi ji adhered to this belief and turned into tangible actions. When came to India in 1915, after sensing the socio-political environment, he decided to apply what he learn in his past days in South Africa and thereby in used tools of truth & nonviolence to carry forward the Indian independence movement. Backward life moulds our thoughts, beliefs and as Grandhi ji said - "A man is <sup>but</sup> a product of his ~~two~~ beliefs. what he thinks, he becomes".

But life is multidimensional and similarly all aspects of past and future too could be analysed on multiple grounds, as an interconnected wave of living & understanding.

Evidently, in one of the darkest phase of Indian politics - the 'Emergency period', which saw mass arrest of opposition leaders, denials of fundamental rights even

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forced sterilisation, but such "dark ages" too were not useless altogether. No Janata govt. formed afterwards understood political life and its vulnerabilities backward, thereby bringing 46<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment act to undo and remove all ambiguities.

Another review of nations, aka- economy too provides insights. As during 2007 sub-prime crisis, a trend noted was inversion of bond yields - cut to 2019, Economists world wide noted that In USA's economy is again showing signs of inverting bond yields. Sensing this, most shareholders and investors round the globe amended their investing patterns, to thereby saving global economy from any other economical catastrophe.

Talking about economy, let's also talk about what's called - 'first economy' i.e

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Ecology - with increasingly becoming digital, going backward in ecology is becoming more easy & rewarding. As WMO & regional meteorological departments, constantly analyses environmental pattern comparing with early haphazards: eg. La Niña, Polar vortex, ozone depleting in Antarctica all are now being predicted to near perfection. a more pertinent example of 2<sup>nd</sup> waves of covid-19 - after failing for first time, nations round the world have understood their fallouts thereby making future waves far less deadly.

Apart from such global causes and consequences, even most trivial & light-hearted things like sports could validate the running trends. In recent Ind-Aus men's cricket test match at adelaide - India got all out at its lowest - 36 runs. their captain (Indian Team) left, frontline players got injured and knocked out -

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- essentially - what 'cricket pundits' called 'sink' of Indian team & now impossible to bounce. But not only did they bounce back but won over Gabba (broken 438 yrs feat), all this marking Australian coach Justin Langer said - "Never ever ever underestimate Indians". The reason of this turnaround was simple - 'learning from past' - as winning skipper Rahane put it.

All aforementioned aspects don't operate in social vacuum, thus it would be pertinent to view social grounds of Indian society since post-vedic ages have been plagued by menaces, particularly women, subjugation & untouchability. Need to remove them was understood by greatest stalwarts like - Grandhiji (who called untouchability as a 'gravest sin') & Nehruji (who accorded status of a country to its women) to name a few. Indian society since then is correcting its historical errors by legal, constitutional.

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initiatives, largely motivated by the egalitarian society in vedic era to reestablish the 'Ramarajya' (good governance). Even the pioneers like Rammohan Roy, Jshurachandra too used ancient scriptures to improve present and future.

Thus, essentially backward life certainly helps in not only taking right decisions, but taking decisions & making them right! OR is it not?!

As many propounds an ambitiveness, too i.e. life is unidirectional, it keeps moving forward, whatever is left, is left! There is no point in turning back and opening pandora's box. Even in popular Hinduism it's said - "Beeti taahi bisaar de" (forget the past) or "Beet gyi so baat gyi" (whatever done is done). well this not looks too absurd too atleast logically. Since, looking back in the past can is more prone to bring deepest of sorrows than highest of joys.

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Maybe that's why - 'Past' is called 'Bhoot' in Hindi, as it's like a ghost & no-one even in their wildest dream wishes to go near one! Even Bhagvad Gita - talks that how a person who is stuck in his past can never attain freedom from attachment and henceforth 'no kshai'.

- Despite these arguments, this anti-thesis is surely a far-stretched one. Disparaging or fearing past is akin to disrespecting your elders, it is not only unethical but also irrational. Past is like an 'opportunity' to improve future. & fearing from past is akin to fearing oneself - as unless & you understand what's done, how can you undo it? Thereby a delicate balance is needed between past and future, because between banks of past and future, what flows is life!

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Today, we as a society have come to an edge of cliff. forward is mighty ocean of falling social order, diluting relations, soiling of institutes by their own priests. from here progress is to taking a step "backward" - rejuvinating the ideals of humanity - by crusaders - Gandhi, Nehru, Martin Luther King Jr, Nelson Mandela etc. and then invoking the "Hammer" inside us and crossing this sea. As they say -

"Bhootah astya bhavishasya,  
Kushal vastutara asti"  
(Past is the perfect architect of future)

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Dissent is the safety  
valve of a democracy

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once, there was a king who loved to rule by decree and any dissent or disagreement was deemed as rebellion and was suppressed brutally. No wonder, his kingdom went in utter chaos, almost on verge of collapsing. Thereby he called all well-renowned political pundits and asked them 'mantra' for safety valve. Accordingly after months of hardwork they returned with a book; king said "it's too bulky! shorten it". After weeks, they returned with few pages, king again asked to compress it! Thus, after few days they returned to king with a small slip. king opened, it read - "mantra is Tantantra (democracy)".

This story is worth mentioning here as it highlights, what chaos ~~if~~ can dissent create if not respected & value of

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democracy. Before delving any further few pertinent questions here would be what is dissent? what is democracy? what is the relation between them?

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Dissent is simply the act of showing disagreement from any order, belief, thought or action. It stems from dissatisfaction and can be manifested in forms of protest, agitation, disobedience etc.

On the other hand Democracy (Demo-people + cratos-rule) is rule by the people, for the people, off the people (- Lincoln).

They both are inseparable to each other.

"Dissent is to democracy as what prush is to paint". It ensures the democratic ethos are well-spirited & people centric.

Though democracy is not only about dissent but also, it's nothing without dissent, as dissent acts as leash on demons of democracy & as a Chinese proverb says

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"we never lose our demons, we only learn to tame them". In its absence the demons can corrupt democracy, thus it would be appropriate to call dissent as a 'safety valve'. Just as a safety valve it prevents the system from collapsing!

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Many great minds like Plato, Churchill were completely disdained of Democracy. Plato called it "mobocracy", Touqueville went further & called it "Tyranny of majority". In such background role of democracy dissent even becomes more important. For instance, in west there have been many instances when the fall of democracy was almost certain, but it not only sustained but thrived from crises, all thanks to venting out mechanism by dissent!

on 1 December 1955 in world's oldest democracy (USA), an African American - Rosa Parks was asked to leave her seat in city bus and go to the end, for

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a white person. She dissented, & was then ~~even~~ thrown out of bus. This act of dissent enmarked the beginning of civil rights moment against the 'mightiest demon' of prevailing order - Racism, which could gobble up the entire democratic order. But it ultimately was not only famed but brought to knees, thereby rejuvenating democracy, just by dissent!

Another such demon - LoGBT phobia, in west was so strong, that ~~as~~ systematically a section of society was undermined in full-fledged democracy. Its extent could be estimated by fact that HIV was regarded as LoGBT plague. But LoGBT activists & reform oriented civil society refused to kneel before this demon. This consistent disagreement, ultimately bore fruits, when in 2015 - Supreme court of USA decriminalised LoGBT marriages.

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Democracy in India had different historical trajectory, as it was not received by masses but was awarded from top & chosen by the political masses. Yet, Dissent serves its function here as well. why?

As Amartya Sen, put it, India has an unbroken civilisation of debate, tolerance & discussion. Thus diverse opinions are not only tolerated rather celebrated! Moreover the 'priests of democracy' in India have systematically inculcated this culture. Grandhiji in his sessions promoted different opinions than that of his. Nehru, too in constituent assembly respected opposition. Despite having full capacity, he didn't pass 'Hindu code of laws', because opposition has different opinion and he welcomed it. This culture is till now acting as safety valve of democracy on different aspects of life.

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Till 1960s, Indian democracy was largely centralised, and allegedly started becoming lax, unable to meet people's aspirations.

There was widespread anguish over political corruption. In such crisis dissent was again manifested by split in regional parties - which not only satisfied people-centre governance but re-strengthened democracy as cooperative federalism.

Even in modern politics too, dissent has played its role. Even today constitution itself promotes it. Tools like - No <sup>confidence</sup> motion, censure motion, Right to peacefully protest (Ar. 19) have institutionalised it. Its achievement in modern day politics could be analysed by how a region plagued by insurgency and a radical activist - Zoramthang not only popularised dissent of North East people, particularly of Mizoram, but also helped in making it "Switzerland of East".

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- In Ecological front, when a new draft of EIA was launched. Many of its clauses were resented, thus emerged a widespread voice of dissent, regarding the Jullibie environment. Yet, again it forced the govt. to rule back some of the clauses and issue clarification.

All aforementioned aspects don't operate in social vacuum, thus social aspect too is necessary. When post-vedic era was in clutches of menaces - caste, untouchability etc. and a miniscule fraction holds monopoly, then dissenting opinion emerged in form of Buddhism, Jainism, etc. which not only provided solace to down-trodden but restored falling order. Apart from caste minorities, other minorities too were being oppressed in one way or other. As Nehru said "Success of democracy is not how what majority think but how minority feels".

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with constitutional & legal rights, ~~the~~  
today religious minorities, gender minorities  
are increasingly able to hold their  
dissent, thus reinstating democracy. After  
all this way a debatable question would  
be what are impacts of dissent in democracy?  
or is it all hanky-dory with dissent?

For understanding impact or  
consequence, examples of countries like  
Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy etc can provide  
insight. Here the uncomfortable opinion was  
suppressed as brutal as Holocaust! Even in  
today's time, countries like Thailand (monarchy),  
China (communist), or Pakistan, etc are  
still intolerant to dissent. Here sections  
are targeted systematically and marginalised.  
result is clear in their disparaged world  
images, huge trust deficit & ever-lasting  
protests and wars. Thus ~~there~~ they lack  
essence of dissent & thereby essence of

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democracy, which is put by Voltaire as "I may not agree with what you are saying, but I will defend to death your right to say it".

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However another line of thought see dissent & democracy as antithetical. It holds former weakens social fabric of a nation and has potential to tear away the democracy into by million billion bleeding pieces! As, it gives rise to a domino effect and snowballs into a catastrophic ultimatum. A recent & pertinent example would be of US-capitol hill riots, which turned the U.S.A into "Divided States of America". All because of a section of "The People" (Trumpists) dissented with the loss of Trumpism & thereby can't withstand democratic ethos.

Political leaders round the world are increasingly adhering to this line of thought. Thus systematic efforts are undertaken

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to eliminate 'dissent'. A cult of "surveillance society" is emerging, any one with unpopular opinion is looked down upon.

Power is being for the sake of power, not for power that is just moral and right as deemed by Luther King Jr.

In India, too, multi-headed hydra of Hindutva ideology is reinforcing it to central stage. Political scientists like Yogendra Yadav, claims this will reduce to ours a 'law-utensity democracy' compounded with crony capitalism & conservative judiciary has framed dissent into. It would not be wrong to say 'safety valve itself is no more safe' owing to 'darkness' all around, but, as they say in chinese proverb - "It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness," It's time to light a candle and see the way forward.

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Need of the hour is International cooperation, a pro-active role by International institutes, particularly UN, reforms in globally reputed bodies to meet aspirations of 21<sup>st</sup> century; like UNSG, WHO, G20. At National level, legal back-ups must be given to right to rationally dissent, civil society movement should widen its horizons & most importantly people must be sensitized via education curriculum, new media, mass media etc. An inter-related wave of intent, reform & implementation will be the "safety valve of safety valve of democracy" (-dissant).

"Break my idols, name street's on  
Other's name, remove me from currency,  
celebrate National day on another calendar  
date, if you want to remember me  
then remember my ideals, remember

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intolerance is intolerable, remember we have to live together as brothers not perish together as fools, remember respecting others as 'others' is respecting God" - This would be the clarion call of Grandhiji today. So, we got a problem, we know the 'mantra' then let's all start working. As Sri Vivekananda said,

"Uthista, Jagrita, Bhabya,  
Varannibhuchita"

(Arise, Awake & Stop not till goal is reached!)

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