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3. Great principles, Great ideals know no nationality

After we got our independence from British rule, one of the most onerous tasks facing our politicians was framing a constitution, conducive to not only our society & history, but also our future.

~~The~~ The nascent energy released in the people, raised expectations in their minds from the text of the first book of the land.

In this endeavour, the constitution makers also borrowed many characteristics from other constitutions & systems. For example, the concept of Fundamental Rights, was inspired by the US constitution & values like liberty, equality & fraternity from the French Revolution.

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Ideals & principles such as these are considered as integral parts of our life, even though they started out as foreign ideals. Hence, it can be said that great ideals & principles know no nationality.

The question arises, what is a good ideal or principle? In my mind, I refer to the ideas of Immanuel Kant, who said that one should follow something that can have universal application, & makes the society better. Although we have differences, we are bonded by the most crucial of similarities: that we are all human, & being as such, we have some common ideas of what a good principle is.

Principles like compassion, integrity, humanism & courage, can never be considered to be bound by borders, for they are essential values that

help guide our behaviours into doing what is right, not just for ourselves, but also for those around us.

Goodness beyond Borders

When we can see that those around us are suffering at the hand of societal constraints, it is our responsibility to rise up against injustice. Unfortunately, a lot of us lack the courage to challenge prevailing norms, no matter how regressive they are. They can learn from Malala Yousufzai, who endured a bullet, to ensure women around her could access education; education for women, which was ~~seen~~ ^{seen} as "foreign" by the Taliban, but which she understood to be an ideal that transcends borders.

It is rightly said that climate change knows no borders. It affects us all, albeit unequally. The fight against climate change is multi-pronged, from as tall actions like mitigating

finances, to as seemingly smaller actions like gathering support for the fight against climate change. We tend to think that one person's actions would not be able to make much difference, but we forget that the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. This is the idea behind Mission LiFE, piloted by India at CoP 26, which seeks to promote responsible activities from Indian tradition around the world, for ~~good ideas~~ great ideas know no nationalities.

No matter which nationality one belongs to, sport has the tendency to bind us all. Such is the uncanny ability of sport, that it helps to break barriers between adversaries, & make them applaud the brilliance of each other. This spirit was seen when the British

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Indian Hockey Team won the Gold medal at the 1936 Berlin Olympics, & picked up their medals under the loud cheers of approval of the German public, countrymen of a team that had lost the final. This is because great ideals like pursuit of excellence know no nationality

The pursuit of excellence in scientific endeavour has been a part of Indian culture for thousands of years. Science is not for one, but for all. The scientific achievements of one, are not to be belittled, even if they are of one's rival, but have to be celebrated, for it is a victory for us all. This ideal was seen by the worldwide jubilation & celebration on the successful landing of Chandrayaan 3 on the Lunar South Pole, for great ideals like absence of jealousy know no nationalities or borders.

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The presence of international borders has brought about the field of foreign policy. In today's world of 'realpolitik', it is said that there are no permanent friends or enemies in international relations, but only common interests. That being as it is, there are universal ideals like equality & right to self determination that must be given primacy, come what may. This was seen during the Cold War, when India was the first country to speak against apartheid in South Africa at UN General Assembly, even when some so called developed nations were supporting the regime, while having equality in their systems themselves. This was based on the premise that good ideals know no nationalities, & must be strived for by everyone, & for everyone.

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The purpose for economics has changed from only going after growth to striving for development. There has been an understanding that the earth has enough for ~~not~~ everyone's need but not for one man's greed. The principle of equity & welfare has spread around the world, even into staunch Capitalist societies like the US, where there has been a shift to welfare.

This is due to the understanding that equitable growth & development is a universal ideal, not confined to nationalities, but acceptable globally.

As a part of reforms in various sectors in India, there has been a focus on bringing "global best practices" ~~to India~~ recently. This is based on the understanding that although the status quo in society might be different, the want for betterment is the same. This is evident in the new National

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Education Policy 2020, which has brought international modalities like play-study, multi-dimensional courses, & focus on early childhood care & education, as these ideals of growth of education ~~are~~ & ~~the~~ betterment of ~~so~~ children are universal.

When Perceptions Differ

A hero for one might be a villain for another. It all depends on our vantage point & our priorities.

If we value self more than the other, we see means & ends one-dimensionally. As long as situations benefit us, we have a positive opinion of them, not withstanding the effects ~~they~~ might have on someone else.

This is the difference between patriotism & jingoism; while patriotism is based on positive values, jingoism is based on the concept of the 'other'; someone who is not a part of our nation, & does not deserve rights.

This can be seen in the perception about Winston Churchill in UK & India. While he is celebrated as a war hero in the UK, he is remembered as the cause of over 3 million deaths due to the Bengal famine of 1943.

Although patriotism is a universal value, 'othering' causes harm to a group, & is not considered as a desirable entity.

Perceptions also differ by culture.

Societal ethics about certain issues vary around the world but this does not mean that

human rights must be trampled upon to keep these intact. As society changes, ethics change with it, & ~~most~~ positive ideals must be encouraged. This can be seen in the gradually increasing acceptance of sexual minorities around the world.

As human beings, we are more similar than different. As such, there are great ideals that are universal in nature, & overarch the differences ~~is~~ between societies.

One of the best instances of universal ideals ~~is~~ are that of Mahatma Gandhi.

Although his ideals were shaped & perfected in his struggles in South Africa & India, his ideals like ahimsa, satyagraha, compassion, right to self determination, &

Equal rights for all were able to
inspire the far off Civil Rights
Movement in US & Martin Luther
King Junior. Hence, it can be said
that great principles, great ideas
know no nationalities



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8. We cannot despair for humanity, since we ourselves are human beings.

An integral part of Indian foreign policy has been its support & voice for upliftment of the "third world".

Right from pushing for decolonisation in the UN since the 1950s, to playing an integral part in the Non-Aligned Movement, to recent initiatives like using its G-20 Presidency to voice the concern of the "Global South", making the unheard heard has been our mission.

This drive is derived from its own experience of 200 years as a colony & the hardships faced.

We realised that being bystanders to others' plight is not an appropriate strategy, & it is our duty to give voice to the voiceless.

The world ~~is~~ requires empathy & action, not sympathy & inaction.

Losing hope in the face of adversity is an unfortunate reality of our time. This is partly due to existence of a pessimism bias in our society, which focuses more on failures than on successes. We do this as people are generally loss averse, & try to avoid situations that ~~are~~ are difficult to face, & require consistent & constant efforts.

There needs to be an understanding that the problems around us will not go away on their own, whether they ~~is~~ affect us or not. So, there is no point in sitting & sulking, & a need to pull-up your socks & get to work

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Overcoming Apprehensions

It is true that the world is facing a climate catastrophe. Although it may feel like like a lost cause, motivation & grit is required to face the challenge head on. Unfortunately, people do not realise what actions of a single person can do, & do not partake in this struggle. They can learn from Greta Thunberg, who led a solo fight to ~~against~~ be heard, & refocus efforts on climate change. She could have sat at home & complained, but she took it on herself to do good for humanity.

A quality that is required to do something, ~~is courage~~. ~~Courage~~ for humanity is courage. Courage can help us overcome fears, & focus on doing what is good for humanity, no matter how difficult it may seem. The tragedy is that a lot of

people prefer cowardice & a sense of security, to showing courage & risking themselves for the good of humanity.

They can learn from Oskar Schindler, who while was benefiting from Nazi rule in his business endeavours, was saddened to see the mistreatment of minorities. He did not despair in silence, but took active steps, at his own peril to save over a thousand Jews from Concentration camps, earning the goodwill of millions in the process.

Politicians have the power to change millions of lives with a stroke of a pen. They ~~st~~ have a responsibility to use this power for the good of all humanity. Unfortunately, politicians do not want to take hard calls in order to preserve their position, even when they can see 'ills' in society. They

need to develop emotional intelligence to fulfill their duties.

They must learn from Abraham Lincoln, who, ~~for~~ on seeing the plight of slaves in the US, did not play safe, but made every effort to pass the Emancipation Proclamation, even though he ~~was~~ & his people had to suffer.

He realised that slaves did not need his sympathy or pity, but his action

It is a reality of our society that a lot of our members live in pitiful conditions. All of us have seen homeless in cities live in squalor, without basic needs, & no hope for their future. Most of us feel sorry for them, go past them in our fancy vehicles & forget about them in a few

moments. But government does not have this luxury of being able to forget the downtrodden. In pursuance of Gandhi's Talisman, there has been a launch of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, to provide affordable housing for the poor. They do not need our despair, but our effort.

Gandhi also talks about his "Trusteeship Theory", where it is a moral responsibility of the rich to help overall society. Unfortunately, we see there is increasing concentration of wealth, where according to World Inequality Report; 1% of the population has 71% of the income. There is a need to inculcate a triple bottom line approach in business practices, but also there is a need to show ~~to~~ the rich ~~of how~~ positive role models that exist.

A suitable role model in this regard would be Bill Gates, one of the richest man on the planet, & founder of Bill & Melinda Gates

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Foundation. He could have stayed in his ivory tower & despaired at the Situation of the world, but instead he went over & above in his efforts to work for the betterment of humanity in various fields like vaccine supply, HIV prevention, food security etc.

Power of Positivity

A negative attitude towards life helps no one. Pessimism only hampers present & future efforts towards overall development.

Doctrine of humanism talks about the love for all mankind, & doctrine of progress of man talks about his ability to become better

This ability to become better is the fundamental for change in our society, &

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this doctrine speaks about believing in humans, that they can become better.

Having a positive mindset can help us overcome odds, & work towards our goals in a free manner. Believing in the ability of humans to change also helps to build relationships & social cohesiveness.

This social integration was sought by Nelson Mandela at the end of the apartheid era. "Forgiving" the government of the day, he did not practice reprisals against Afrikaner South Africans, as was expected. He believed that everyone deserved an opportunity to become better & had the capacity for it.

Doctrine of progress is also the fundamental ~~ex~~ of our reformative justice system, which talks about second chances & ability to change.

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Human beings have a unique position in this world. They understand what plagues it, & can help to get rid of it. For this, there needs to be a feeling of oneness, what our traditional value system calls - "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam".
The world is a family.

Swami Vivekananda spoke about the nature of the world as a family. He said that everyone had the responsibility to help others -
Service of jiva is worship of siva.

Although he could have sat & pitied the ills that plagued the ~~world~~ country, he took the hard step of undertaking the task of spiritual upliftment of the people.

Even today, his Ramakrishna Mission is actively involved in serving all sections of society. Hence it can be said that we cannot despair for humanity, since we ourselves are human beings.