

FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR



The Editor when delivering keynote address at the second Avabhai Memorial Lecture at K.R.Cama Oriental Institute, Mumbai

“Twenty-first century belongs to Asia.” This is slogan given by our Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which is neither empty nor jingoistic. It is rather a bold expression of faith in the roots of the Asian cultures and values that have contributed so immensely to the evolution of human civilization since time immemorial; and still has many promises and offerings for the human civilizational progress underlying the principles of love, amity and universal brotherhood, particularly embedded in the humanitarian wisdom stored in the classical Asian literatures.

The Asian Renaissance, which is long due, still awaits its turn to become a powerful cultural movement by assuming the global leadership in the twenty-first century to effect global peace and sustainable progress.

We all know that European Renaissance, or the revival of the interests in the classical literatures and cultures of Greece and Rome, when transformed into a powerful intellectual movement, not only metamorphosed the middle-aged Europe into the modern West to give a fresh impetus to the modern entrepreneurship and scientific explorations, but has also determined, directed and dictated the entire course of the human history during the past two centuries.

Unfortunately, the Western Renaissance has an ugly facet too, as when it has often been subordinated by the avaricious colonial policies and Totalitarianism to hijack science and technology for the realization of the lustful hedonistic ends with insidious devaluation of the human dignity and values.

Furthermore, the materialistic rat race of the modern age has also inflicted irreparable damages to our social institutional fabrics to exacerbate broken families and broken marriages; abandonment of the children and old citizens.

The Asian Renaissance, in turn, seeks to 'cherish the ancient and relish the modern'; 'foster the best and discard the worst'; 'repair the damages by replenishment of the human values in the spirit of reason and humanitarian wisdom, so meticulously enshrined in the Buddhist and Confucian writings; in the literatures of Aryabhata and Varhamihir.

We all know that the European Renaissance emerged in the late fourteenth century to become a powerful intellectual Movement by the early seventeenth century that undisputedly gave a fillip to the scientific thinking all across Europe manifesting in progressive outlook (or 'scientific temper') that fostered the spirit of entrepreneurship.

The Renaissance made Europeans rediscover the relevance of their classical learning, which, in turn, not only infused a deeper sense of European pride to take lessons from the ancient Greek and Roman literatures and use the wisdom based on such learnings as an engine for scientific thinking to effect qualitative improvement of life. And that eventually transformed the middle-aged Europe to a modern Europe to establish the unquestionable supremacy of West to assume the global leadership to determine the courses and directions of human progress relevant to the modern age. Such a phenomenon, as a matter of fact, is an embodiment of the principles of rationalism and scientific thinking for setting up new standards for a “civilised nation” or a “civilised society” by taking lessons from ancient European literatures.

Unfortunately, the Western view of civilisation, however, became synonymous to the materialistic progress, which became the principal criterion to rate all kinds of progress, viz., scientific, technological, economic, cultural, spiritual by insidious devaluation of the human dignity, ethical standards and human rights, which in turn resulted in Colonialism, Racism, Genocide and so on. Such tendencies also damaged the the social institutional fabrics in a western society as is

exacerbated by way of the crumbling foundations of the western families, where rate of divorce becomes higher than marriages; mental disorders become rampant in want of parental care and family support and so on.

No wonder in the light of new definition of a 'progressive or 'civilised society' underlying the principles of material progress the genocide of the natives of America and Australia was "justified". In the Indian context, the British Raj, propagated that 'India never had a thinking culture.'

Yet the spirit of scientific understanding cannot be undermined. It has definitely been the key to human progress. West used this key through the powerful movement in the name of Western Renaissance despite the aforementioned shortcomings. India and Asia, however, still look for such a Renaissance which demands scientific thinking by shedding the superstitions and unprogressive thoughts often pronounced in our low spirited entrepreneurship. We must note that we have adequate volumes of classical wisdom literatures for inspiration, which can infuse genuine entrepreneurship for real growth and progress, if appropriately and adequately interpreted. Such a powerful intellectual movement - to look back to the ancient literatures embedded in the wisdom would help revive the much awaited Indian or Asian Renaissance.

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