Isn’t it Amazing We Survived? Or It’s Not Over Yet

Ashok Agrwaal
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The Europeans had the dream, and they had the determination to achieve it. We had the courage to survive it. Till now that is. The European dream is not over yet. Nor is our resilience nearing exhaustion. Both have a way to go. The dream (or nightmare) plays on.

One could write endless pages on this dream-nightmare/thrust-parry/genocide-population overload. Where does one begin? Did the whole thing start with the rise of Judaism? Was Moses the original sin? Or should one blame Jesus and the Christians? We could also blame the Romans, for their hedonistic excesses, which resulted in their downfall at the hands of the barbarians from the north. Maybe the Christians would not have got so firm a hold on Europe had it not been for the backlash against Roman excesses.

Perhaps both the Romans and the Germanic tribes who overthrew the Western Roman Empire are to blame. After all, a direct cause of the cancer of modernity was the feudal-medieval past of Europe. A past born of a curious (to say the least) mix of Roman and Northern barbarities. A past steeped in rigidities, absurdities, heresies, slaveries, persecutions, inquisitions, and witch hunts. A dark and dank past, which was the best, most powerful incentive imaginable for the bloody, though brilliant, slash that followed.

Allowing one’s imagination to fly a little more, maybe we can just about include Islam, the last of the three Abrahamic faiths to emerge from the dry wastes of Palestine-Arabia, in the blame game. It seems reasonable to assume that rising Islam had a most powerful impact on Catholic-Christian Europe. Any takers? Would the European-Christian civilisation like to shove the responsibility of its worst excesses on the pernicious influence of fundamentalist Islam? Aren’t they doing it already with respect to much that they perpetrate today?

But what was the most immediate cause of the madness? I pose this question specifically for the sake of our Cartesian minds, trained to linear fine-ness in casuistry. What if we can’t identify one? Does that mean no one is to blame? Or, that everyone is to blame? Like the Europeans would like to think with respect to global warming? Should the rise of Europe be viewed as part of the larger scheme of things? Not in a religious, theistic sense but in the way Buddha described it: a phenomenon in the realm of dependent co-arising. This is because that is. That is because this is. Europe was because Africa, America, Australia and Asia were? If Buddha was around today he would have probably said, yes to this question. But I am not Buddha. Not yet. So I will continue with my thought stream.

Moving on, I am wonderstruck at several phenomena. I am amazed at the power of the European thrust. It has spread its tentacles into the remotest nook and cranny of the world. No conqueror, no conquest was so comprehensive, so complete, so continuing. What it could not conquer by brute force and unprecedented barbarity it conquered by deceit, duplicity and diplomacy. By fine words and finer sentiments. And it continues to conquer in these manners: simultaneously using murder and conciliation to subdue and subjugate. To serve the purposes of its compulsions, which purposes it itself does not know. Truly, a magnificent achievement by any
standards. A benchmark for all future conquests. God (if there is one) forbid that there is another conqueror, or another conquest.

I am also struck by the ongoing nature of this conquest. Starting with physical occupation, displacing and exterminating tens of millions and, subjugating hundreds of millions more, the conquest evolved to what is called indirect rule: perfected by the British in India and applied by Europe worldwide. Thereafter, in a brilliant application of the philosophical implications of indirect rule, the conquest set its colonies free. Of course, before granting freedom, the structure of subjugation – external and internal – was firmly in place. The European world view was the only alternative. Not only were the Europeanised elites of the former colonies thoroughly convinced (with few exceptions) of this fact, the system for perpetuating this world view was also irrevocably entrenched.

That non-Europeanism has survived despite such a systematic onslaught is also a marvel. As is it marvelous that people subjected to intensive genocide, the original inhabitants of the Americas and Australia, have survived. This tells us something about the resilience of life; of human nature. It also tells us that there is a miscalculation in the European game. Busy discovering manifest destiny, and the individual self, the European conquerors forgot that all processes, including the process of conquest, proceed dialectically. As an aside it is important to mention here that dialectics was neither discovered nor invented by the Europeans. Non-European thought has recognised dialectics as an operating principle of the universe for millennia. Buddha’s thesis of dependant co-arising is one expression of it: this is because that is; that is because this is. And the dialectics of conquest dictates that the tables be turned: the conquerors be conquered, the fires be quenched, and the leaves grow again in all their plethoric diversity.

Be that as it may, battered, bruised, truncated, dystopic-ised, the world has survived this conquest till now. The Europeans, however, have one more ace up their sleeve. This is the ace of irreversible destruction of the global habitat, with (European) technology being the only genie capable of saving us, and the world. Given that the realm of world views is firmly under European control, it is likely that this ace will carry the conquest through: till the tables turn, or the world is destroyed, whatever you may wish to call it.