

WARRING WORLD

Wars seem to be the order of the world. The entire Middle East is sitting on an inferno with Iran attacking many countries with missiles after the US-Israeli strike killed its supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a precision attack. Pakistan and Afghanistan are locked in a series of skirmish and tensions between them could only escalate. The war between Russia and Ukraine never ended. Where does India stand amid all this?

India's foreign policy has managed to be friends with all friendly countries. India is against attacking a sovereign nation without a valid reason. Also India has diversified its oil imports. However, if the wars continue it would mean disruption of supply chains and all the countries would feel the heat. There is a lot of suggestions that India take a stand in the ongoing conflict between Iran and the US-Israel conflict. Prime Minister PV Narsimha Rao once remarked that not taking a position is also a stand. He was asked why he doesn't react to opposition's attacks and is often seen as a non-committed leader. India is in a similar state and it has helped us to survive and grow in this mad world. It's a good policy for nation states not to get involved in the others war and only ask for a negotiated settlement between the warring sides. India's policy on the Russia-Ukraine war has been appreciated and also paid off. New Delhi called both sides to sort out their differences at the negotiating table. At the end both sides respected India's stand. Also, India continued to pursue its relationship with both countries independent of their conflict. Though the west tried to pressurize India into not buying crude from Russia and asked it to condemn President Putin, we did not take the bait and consistently spoke about peace. In the long run, the world understood India's position.

The forgotten power of philosophy

Rajib Ray /
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Philosophy occupies a special place in academia because of its distinctive style. While in other subjects there is an answer to every question, in philosophy there is a question for every answer, so it is said that philosophy is the mother of all academic disciplines and is also the climax. The most striking speciality of philosophy is that it makes us wiser rather than intellectual or logical. Intelligence or logic can be misused, but not wisdom. We all know how some of the most logical sophist judges in Greek Philosophy awarded capital punishment to Socrates, one of the wisest figures in the world.

Some people allege that the world of philosophy and philosophers is imaginary. Their ideas are esoteric and do not have any concern with the problems of ordinary people in society. This allegation reflects a very superficial understanding of Philosophy. To realise how profound the role of the philosopher is, it is necessary to cite a few instances. Few of us know that on March 21, 1977, the then Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, declared the end of the Emergency on the suggestion of Jiddu Krishnamurti (as accounted in the biography of J. Krishnamurti, written by P Jayakar), a renowned humanist and philosopher, whose book 'Freedom from the Known' is considered a revolutionary work in academia. Similarly, on November 8, 2010, when the then US President Barack Obama addressed both Houses of the Indian Parliament, he cited the influence of four Indians - Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar. This acknowledgement underlines the global contribution of philosophers, and that of Indian philosophers.

A philosopher influences our inner self more than the external environment, which is why Socrates used to refer



philosopher as a 'doctor of the soul' who prescribes proper attitudes and practices to nurture our mental health and happiness. In a world where high economic growth rates, intellectual skills, and advancement of technology are considered as criteria of a prosperous society, philosophers administer some new thought process to understand human life in a deeper sense.

John Dewey, whose ideas on philosophy of education work as a trailblazer, once said, 'Education is not preparation for life, education is life itself.' There is hardly anyone who can ignore its significance in the present rat-race competitive world. In the era of artificial intelligence and Chat GPT, teachings like "Appo Deepo Bhava" - Be your own lamp of Gautama Buddha, Socrates' proposition "An unexamined life is not worth living", or Swami Vivekananda's call "Strength is life, weakness is death" are the core values of our existence. No sensible society should neglect these insightful ideas. If most of us had been philosophical thinkers, we would not have been

misled by scheming politicians and fake gnomes all these years.

Philosophical ideas can play a very significant role in addressing these types of socio-political and ethical malaise in society. We evaluate Mahatma Gandhi as a champion of truth and non-violence, but his most impactful teaching is his unmatched emphasis on human dignity. As he writes in his autobiography - 'It has always been a mystery to me how men can feel themselves honoured by the humiliation of their fellow beings.' Unfortunately, we failed to understand this fundamental truth that our mind is the silent architect of our life.

So, if there is restlessness in our mind and shrewdness in our behaviour, then there will be complete chaos in our lives as well as in society. One can say that Philosophy unites a world which is deeply shattered in the name of region, religion, caste, race and ideology.

A major challenge for philosophy is its decline in academia because of fewer enrollments of students in this subject.

It is beyond comprehension why a

subject which is considered the mother of all other subjects is losing its importance amongst students. Universities across the country face this dismal condition, and the lack of opportunities in this field is one of the most important reasons. Our policymakers should take note of this. Even though the National Education Policy-2020 makes several references to the Indian Knowledge System and Philosophy, our lawmakers and educationists must make more efforts to address the problem of the dwindling popularity of this subject. One may suggest that this subject be introduced in the class 11th and 12th of the CBSE and ICSE Boards, as it's been done at the school level in some state boards.

One must keep in mind that Philosophy is not just an academic subject rather also concerned with the upliftment of humanity. Its role is very intense and wide.

As a mother of all subjects, it is indispensable for the intellectual and ethical growth of human beings. The value of philosophy should not be evaluated in getting final answers but in the very process of seeking them, which elevates human life and understanding. It helps individuals navigate life by fostering an unselfish, open-minded approach that reduces anxiety and increases the ability to understand, justice, and love.

As Nobel Laureate Bertrand Russell wrote in his well-known essay 'The Value of Philosophy' in 1912 - "If all men were well off, if poverty and disease had been reduced to their lowest possible point, there would remain much to be done to produce a valuable society; and even in the existing world the goods of the mind are at least as important as the goods of the body."

It is exclusively among the goods of the mind that the value of philosophy is to be found; and only those who are not indifferent to these goods can be persuaded that the study of philosophy is not a waste of time."

THE FACEOFF: SUCCESS & FAILURE IN THE CORPORATE WORLD

APS MALHOTRA

A couple of days ago, a childhood friend dropped in to meet me. Otherwise quite a jovial person, with a cutting-edge sense of humour and repartee, that day he looked dejected and worn down. Lines of stress and anxiety hovered on his brow like dark monsoon clouds. Immediately, I discerned that something was amiss. After some prodding, he broke down, and sobbing like a child, told me that he had been sidelined- once again- for progression in the corporation for which he had worked for close to four decades.

On hearing his plight, I found myself returning to an old, unsettling question: What is success, and what is failure? Are they merely opposite sides of the same coin, or are they far more complex than we admit? For centuries, sages and philosophers have wrestled with this paradox, leaving behind a vast treasury of thought. While their reflections offer frameworks and metaphors, none can give a definitive answer. My own understanding of success has not been static. Rather, it has evolved with time-sometimes sub-



tly, sometimes painfully.

At different stages, I have measured success against different yardsticks, in the process creating an edifice that rests on four core pillars: family, health, finances, and professional standing. Together, they form a balanced architecture of a well-lived life. Measured against these visible metrics of the corporate superstructure, my friend's journey seems grossly underwhelming.

The foremost reason is that institutions, by their very nature, lack warmth, com-

passion and transparency, leading to a cascading toxic downturn, where outcomes are declared without sufficient explanation and where, sadly, when progression stalls, clarity is rarely offered. This opacity makes self-assessment extremely challenging- as one is forced to ponder whether this is because of a shortfall in one's capability, or the unpredictable dynamics of a complex system? Amid all this, the metaphor that comes to mind is a race- perhaps, a rat race. In any race, performance matters, but so does

the referee, so does the track, so do the unseen rules that govern who advances and who remains sidelined, because when systems harbour unfairness- subtle or overt- careers can be quietly impacted, sometimes permanently, often ominously, leaving no scope for reclamation.

As for my friend, the story does not end here, because outside the narrow corridor of hierarchy, his life tells a different tale- he has fared well in education, his finances are stable, his family life is fulfilling and his health, for the most part, has been kind to him. To calm his frayed nerves, I explained that these are not minor footnotes, but that they are foundational achievements.

If success is viewed through this wider lens, the narrative shifts significantly, and success becomes less about podium finishes and more about the integrity of participation. It is about having run the race without compromising one's core ethics. It is about building a life that, when viewed in totality, feels coherent and meaningful.

And that the saga of success and failure is not epic because of victory or defeat. It is epic because of the lifelong effort to understand what truly counts.

India's ascent and Congress culture of self-flagellation

Balbir Punj

Even as the world begins to acknowledge India's rise as an economic, digital, and diplomatic power, sections of its own political class seem gripped by an impulse to self-flagellate — a compulsive urge to diminish, discredit, and deconstruct national achievements before a global audience. Political frustration and hate are now refashioned as politics.

This sordid phenomenon was starkly visible during the recently concluded five-day (Feb 16-20, 2026) 'AI Impact Summit 2026' held in New Delhi — an event that was neither routine nor ceremonial, but one that signified India's arrival as a principal stakeholder in the global technological order.

Under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi, the Congress ecosystem chose to transform a global diplomatic and technological congregation into a theatre of ridicule and derision, for itself and the country.

The now-infamous "shirtless protest" orchestrated by members of the Congress youth wing within the

precincts of Bharat Mandapam was not an act of democratic dissent in any meaningful constitutional sense. Rather, it was an exhibition of built-in hostility and hatred towards

Prime Minister Modi, which turned into an act that sought to undermine India's global standing.

This sordid drama was not staged by some local Congressmen on their own. It obviously had support from the top. Rahul expressed support for the Youth Congress protest, describing the participants as "Babbar-sheer" (lion-hearted) on February 24.

However, to understand the deeper civilisational implications of this conduct, one must turn to a historical analogy nearly a century old.

In 1927, American author Katherine Mayo published 'Mother India', a text that purported to offer a sociological portrait of Indian civilisation. In reality, the book assembled selectively negative data — child marriage, sanitation deficits, caste discrimination — into a sweeping indictment of India's moral and institutional capacity for self-governance. Its implicit argument was clear: a society so

afflicted by internal pathologies was unfit for political independence.

Writing in Young India on 15 September 1927, Mahatma Gandhi famously dismissed the work as a "drain inspector's report". This phrase was not a rhetorical flourish but a methodological critique. Gandhi did not deny the existence of social problems within Indian society; rather, he objected to their selective amplification and colonial framing as evidence of civilisational inferiority.

Gandhi's approach was deeply rooted in a vital political insight: true internal reform must come from within a civilisation itself, rather than being exploited by external or domestic forces to undermine its right to self-determination. The colonial authorities aimed to twist India's social issues into moral justifications for imperial domination.

Today, the political formation that self-claimed genealogical and ideological descent from Gandhi's legacy — the Congress leadership centred around Rahul Gandhi — appears increasingly inclined to replicate the

very epistemic framework that Mahatma Gandhi sought to dismantle.

The controversy involving Galgotia University at the AI Summit — wherein an allegedly Chinese-manufactured robotic dog was displayed as an indigenous innovation — was swiftly extrapolated by Rahul Gandhi into a sweeping denunciation of the summit as a "disorganised PR spectacle" in which Indian data was ostensibly being commodified.

The resemblance to Mayo's methodological strategy is hard to ignore. In both cases, episodic shortcomings are generalised into systemic incapacity; isolated institutional lapses are reframed as civilisational deficiencies.

While Mayo's narrative served colonial interests by portraying India as unfit for self-rule, contemporary political rhetoric risks portraying India as unprepared for technological leadership in the emerging digital order.

This is hardly unprecedented. During the 2020 visit of then United States President Donald Trump, sections of the anti-CAA lobby mobilised

protests that escalated into violence in parts of Delhi, thereby projecting an image of internal discord before an international audience.

The parallels with the present moment are instructive: in both instances, domestic political contestation was internationalised in ways that risked compromising India's strategic narrative.

It is instructive, in this regard, to recall the exemplary conduct displayed in 1994 when Pakistan sought to internationalise the Kashmir issue at the United Nations Human Rights Commission through the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. Then Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao rose above partisan considerations and entrusted the leadership of India's delegation in Geneva to Opposition leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

The resulting diplomatic intervention successfully neutralised Pakistan's resolution, securing support even from countries such as China and Iran. The episode remains a testament to a political culture in which national interest superseded party rivalry.

In contemporary India, however, that culture appears increasingly attenuated. The AI Impact Summit, hosted at Bharat Mandapam, attracted global technology leaders from companies such as Google, Microsoft, Amazon, OpenAI, and Anthropic, alongside heads of state including Emmanuel Macron.

Hotel tariffs across Delhi surged dramatically during the summit — five-star accommodations reportedly exceeding ₹1 lakh per night — reflecting both the scale of participation and the economic opportunities generated by such international engagements.

The summit culminated in the adoption of the New Delhi Declaration, endorsed by nearly ninety countries and international organisations, emphasising the democratic diffusion of AI resources, secure system development, and equitable access to technological innovation. Investment pledges exceeding \$250 billion for infrastructure and \$20 billion for deep-tech venture capital further underscored global confidence in India's digital trajectory.