

# Because I have got lots of it

November 28, 2000

Here is a true record of a dialogue between myself and Jwalita around 8:50am on Mon 6 Nov 2000. Divyanshu has left for school around 8:25am, Shuchita has left for school around 8:40am but halfway through she remembers that she has forgotten something and returns home. Since she has made the necessary effort to walk to school, her responsibility is over and now I have to drop her at her school (on the way to dropping Jwalita at her baby sitter's). Their mother has left around 8:20am to go to school too. With everyone out of the house and myself busy getting ready, Jwalita finds an opportunity to uninterruptedly play with her favourite objects.

The scene of the dialogue is: I am tying my shoe laces, Shuchita is staring at me, wondering why I am taking so long, Jwalita walks in delicately with a clear plastic purse, showing coins inside, and she strikes an important posture. I could see that she is in the middle of playing with her dolls; I humour her, "Jwalita, you have so much money!"

She says, "Money is very, very, very important."

This was a shock. A complete anti-thesis of what we have been drumming into their heads. It took me a few seconds to recover and then I asked her, "Why?" (The money is important.)

She replied, "Because I have got lots of it."

If her former statement was a shock this was a blow and a terribly humiliating one at that! The realisation I made after years of study and observation was hers at the tender age of 4.

To be an Indian in this day-and-age is to be cursed in many ways. Of these several curses one particular curse had been oppressing me till very recently. It was to live with three conflicting but dominant ideas: (i) the India of our observations and experiences, (ii) the India "as it should be" of the people whose opinions we valued through our education, and (iii) the prosperous Western World.

The India of my observations was the India of people like my mother, whose strength of character and abilities could make India one of the greatest nation and yet her entire life was drowned in the daily grind for survival. The India "as it should be" advocates' first item of business was to convince India that Indians were guilty for its large population, they were miserable because they were poor, and they were worse than dumb animals because they couldn't speak English. Their character, their abilities, their hard work, their mastery of their own language accounted for naught. The people who made themselves the arbitrators of India "as it should be" have given themselves many high sounding names but let's call them Indians Number 2.

It took me a long time to put the observed India and the India number 2 in perspective. I had not the genius and confidence of Jwalita to do it all on my own. It was through Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, Leo Tolstoy, and Bernard Shaw, that I could find the missing pieces to this puzzle. My experience in life and intellectual development has now convinced me that the brilliance of the character of people like my mother will yet build India into a great nation and India number 2 will be number 2 forever. The time of the former has come and the time of the latter is over. I am at peace about it.

Let me now share my observations and thoughts on the dominance of the West in general and the USA in particular in the recent times. Often in discussions people pose the question, "Why is America doing so well?" The answer, as it comes to me, is that America and Americans made one particular idea as their guiding philosophy in public life. The idea was based on everyday observation of the human nature. They lived that idea with all sincerity. They took great efforts to popularise, communicate, and propagate that idea all throughout the world. Due to their inherent frankness and sincerity in living that idea they have at long last convinced the entire humanity that if the governments are to be founded to govern the intercourse amongst people then the governments should be founded on that idea alone.

What is that idea? Simply stated: Capital is the ONLY trustworthy indicator of right and wrong in public life. Capital is at the root of every human intercourse. Because sheep and cattle have a

capital value, they are more valuable than human beings. New Zealand is richer than India because it has millions of cattle and all that India has is one billion people whose capital value is uncertain. America's genius is not in being rich themselves but it's in convincing us that we are miserable because we don't have capital. And on being asked why is capital important they give the same answer as Jwalita, "Because we have got lots of it!"

Americans have not only convinced us poor souls that we are miserable because we don't have capital but it has also convinced Europe and other Western countries that the American life-style is the best. Through Hollywood and its news agencies, a picture of America as heaven on earth is imprinted on most human minds. If they have a brilliant idea, if they have capital to invest, or if they simply want to have fun they all head for the US. Americans who pride themselves on a competitive market have swallowed all of their competitors!

The American success is due to their own sincere conviction in their ideal. They are honest, upholders of their type of justice, hard working, and they don't shy from going an extra yard or two to imprint their ideas on you. Their ideal of capital as the basis of human intercourse is not nationalistic, not racial, or in anyway counter to the universal spirit of equality that was born from the horrors of World War II. The French idea of equality, fraternity, and liberty was accepted by most nations as an idea useful for its own citizens but only after the horrors of the Jewish death camps, the humanity realised that the French idea has to be applied universally without exceptions.

The supreme and the unchallenged dominance of the US has been in the making for over a century but three events in particular have catapulted the US to the top. The downfall of the USSR, the apotheosis of Diana - The Princess of Wales, and finally Bill Clinton.

Little need be said about the former Soviet Union; all the facts are well-known. But one can't help wondering how come a nation which had such sophisticated technology one day and was a pauper the next. Wealth and technology can't disappear overnight but human mind can be convinced overnight that they might have been rich once but now they are dirt poor. I think Russians underwent a similar morale crushing exercise. But that's history.

The phenomena set in motion by Diana - The Princess of Wales and Bill Clinton are still in the making and will have a major impact on human thought in the next decade or two.

Diana is almost a divine figure now. Her divinity rests on the charity work she did during her life-time. Before the era of Diana, the humanity at large didn't consider the giving of ill-gotten wealth as charity. The character behind the gift was a part of the gift. Even more, a good character was a charity in itself. Poor people could lead a life guided by their conscience and the society considered it a greater charity than the giving of a million dollars by a casino operator. Diana changed all that. In the world where it used to be said that the left hand shouldn't know what the right hand gives, the acts of charity are now written in bold in self-promotions. In pre-Diana era money couldn't buy charity but Diana removed that superstition. In other words, the last remaining barrier to the supremacy of capital was removed by Diana and she has been rightly deified for it.

But it is Bill Clinton who made the final victory-blow for capital. W. Somerset Maugham in his autobiographical novel "Of Human Bondage" narrates his struggle to be moral. He says that the dictum, "conduct your life with due consideration to the policeman around the street corner," serves well but even with all the force of his narrative he couldn't convince the reader to discard their calls of conscience in favour of this dictum. Where most failed Bill Clinton succeeded. His victory seized the idea of "policeman around the corner" from a few doubting minds and foisted it on the entire humanity. We have no choice but to accept it: the accusations made against him have been through the due process of law and he has been exonerated by a body none other than the Senate of the United State of America. Bill Clinton's victory will now make a person think of themselves a fool if they were to think that morality is anything outside of the books of law. In the immortal words of the Australian billionaire Kerry Packer, "(Such people) ought to have their heads examined." The struggling "policeman around the corner" has romped home victorious.

What was sacred, what was private, what was fortified with conviction, what was non-negotiable, what was beyond the reach of capital has been desecrated, made public, shattered to pieces, made negotiable, and has a capital value placed on it. Welcome to the 21st Century.

The world has entered the 21st century with a clear mind (capital, nothing but the capital) and unheard of prosperity. Great minds must have worked hard to make it all happen. But they all would have saved their immense labour, had they enquired of Jwalita and heard her say, "Because I have got lots of it!"