

Upswing in artificial intelligence and downswing in humanism



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The thought that mankind is set on the trajectory of progress gained traction back in the 18th and 19th centuries. Certainly thoughts about the overall wellbeing of mankind got strengthened thanks to the growth of philosophies of republic and democracy coupled with the development of print media, machines and transport and with the industrial revolution.

On the flip side, concerns emerged over man's alienation from Nature, commercialisation of human life and excessive growth of consumerism. Yet, at the same time, hopes about the new world order and about well-being of mankind also gained currency in

the wake of the emergence of national governments, neo-liberal ideologies and trade unions. At the other end of the spectrum, despair and hopelessness about the mankind's future were left behind by the two World Wars of the 20th century, the genocide unleashed by Hitler and the invention of nuclear arms. We are yet to put behind us the bitterness and compromises that followed on the heels of power struggles and nuclear race of the Cold War era against the background of the dominant ideals of liberty and communism.

However, the subsequent science and technology growth and democratic practices attempted to retain intact the thoughts about the common welfare of mankind. If the departing year 2023 is viewed against this background, two striking viewpoints will be thrown up by the study: The fabulous growth of artificial intelligence and the stagnation of humanistic thoughts.

Burgeoning artificial intelligence

There is a quantum leap in the growth of computer intelligence apps as part of what is generally billed as Artificial Intelligence abbreviated as AI. The AI has come into popular use through the app called ChatGPT. While individuals are using it as a private pastime, big corporates and trade concerns are make the most of it for furthering their commercial pursuit and profits. Owing to this technology, imitation has become very easy. The illusions called 'deepfake' have started doing the rounds. To manufacture them with the help of the AI software has become an easy job.

Anybody can produce a totally different video based on a real one. The video wherein Russian President Putin is shown as announcing a halt to the Ukrainian war takes the cake in this

craft. There are scores of miscreants who have spread this false video while, in fact, Putin has not made such an announcement. The people, who happened to see this fake video, were struggling to differentiate between the true and the false.

Apart from this 'fake' syndrome, there are more adverse features of the AI. If the AI starts doing the work done so far by the human brain, there will be an acute unemployment in several spheres. The U.N. has set up an international committee to frame guidelines on the use of the AI. In the days to come, the challenges posed by the AI will become more important and daunting. It seems that the fears expressed in science fiction have the potential of turning real.

Thoughts of humanism getting scarce

The war launched by Russia against Ukraine is yet to come to an end as the world countries are unable to rein in, let alone alienate, Russia. The countries including India are still maintaining trade ties with Russia for the sake of their own economic prosperity. It is not possible either to attack a country strengthened by nuclear arms. At the same time, it cannot be denied that it was power concentration in the U.S.-led NATO, which had pushed Russia to the extent of attacking Ukraine.

Though the U.N. Assembly has 192 countries as its members, only 20 countries are quite powerfully robust in terms of population and economic strength. These countries meet every year in the name of G-20. This year the G-20 conference was held in India under the leadership of India. Yet the G-20 conferences have not taken any positive initiative for the good of the world.

Apart from paying lip service, they have not resolved any of the world issues.

At a time when the Ukrainian war is still going on, the Israeli domination of the Palestinians – an issue the world countries could not resolve for the past half century – has again taken the centrestage, creating yet another spell of violence. The Palestinian militant group Hamas, which has Gaza under its control, launched terrorist attacks on Israel and kidnapped people in October out of frustration over the elusive political solution to the problem. Israel, flying into rage over the offensive, with the support of the U.S., in turn, unleashed a reign of terror in Gaza, mercilessly killing the people with a vengeance. Yet the condemnation of this murderous attack, from the world countries and thinkers all over the world, has been in vain. What is the use of the U.N. resolution passed on ceasefire? Could the thoughts about humanism and wellbeing of mankind and movements espousing humanitarian ideology stop the merciless killing of scores of innocent people? What is the value of the metaphor of ‘world opinion’?

It is very clear that the world is now divided into two camps. It is undeniable that a powerful nuclear and economic alliance has been formed by China, Russia, North Korea and Iran against the U.S.-led countries. Talibans have again captured power in Afghanistan. The hand of this alliance is behind the Hamas’ attacks on Israel and Russia’s onslaughts on Ukraine.

Weird portrait

At this juncture, one cannot help but raise the question whether the polarisation of the world into two mega alliances will bring

back the era of Cold War and World Wars. In the wake of the nuclear arms proliferation, the absurd idea of averting a world war with nuclear arsenals has been shattered.

However, despite the situation wherein military intervention will be in vain if the nuclear countries in alliances engage in a war or instigate a war, there are currently chances that the activities leading to war are on the rise. It is a great setback indeed!

Apart from all these things, the world countries are unable to do anything to prevent the deterioration of environment nor stall the global warming and reduce the concentration of carbon in the atmosphere. We are just looking to science to come up with a magical solution to these problems while we are unable to think of reining in investment-oriented growth and burgeoning production and consumption and of projecting the world's overall welfare. We are just silent spectators even as natural disasters keep assailing several countries. This is why the year 2023, whose end is just a few days away, is set to leave behind a historic weird portrait of an increasing artificial intelligence revolving around the growth of technology and decreasing humanism centred around the world's wellbeing.

Translated by V. Mariappan.