PREDICTING THE UNPREDICTABLE

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"Our FUTURE is not something in which we enter. It's something, which we create!"

Future's unpredictability and ever changing nature has made us agree to the fact that we can never predict our future better than by creating itself. Essentially, future means the dubious situation which happens in the time after the present. With the ever moving pace of time our future is also being moulded every second by our slightest move. Till now, we have done a great many efforts in the field of science to make our future bright and even say that our future is brighter than what our previous generations had. To some extent, yes, this is true. But, is this "brighter" future going to be as such for the next coming generations too? As we ponder on the fact what resources we would leave for our children, the answer clearly turns up to be a big *'No'*. So, have we really created a brighter future than our ancestors? In this dynamic world, are we sure that the resources which we are using un-biasedly and in a totally unplanned manner for our never-ending greed are going to be there for the coming ones to live on this planet? The answers to these questions lie within us.

The quest to use this earth is never ending. It's a matter of fact, that we are not at all conservationists who think about our earth. We are human beings, who perhaps have the maximum eligibility to use up their minds, but are we seriously doing so?

The environmental problems are not the only thing which we must bother about. There's much more in this world which is consistently making efforts to destroy our planet. The problems are not mere obstacles for us to overcome, rather are the greatest challenges which need clear cut and immediate attention and solutions. But, these are not so easy to solve as all these come under one main heading, 'World Problems' that can never be solved without the cooperation of all the beings on the earth.

To solve all of them we can identify twelve Global Grand Challenge areas—such as energy, water, health and environment—namely resource needs and societal needs. We can tackle each of the GGCs with three goals in mind:

- Ensuring basic needs for all people
- Sustaining and improving quality of life
- Mitigating future risks

Humanity has the resources to solve the immediate basic needs as well as anticipate and mitigate future risks—it is not an either/or, zero-sum game. We should encourage and empower innovators to develop solutions suited for any of these three perspectives on the GGCs. Even though we identify twelve GGC areas they reside in a complex web of dependencies and interactions. They are highly interdependent. Any innovation for a GGC at any scale—and particularly at the global systems scale—will necessarily affect and be affected by conditions in other GGCs. This interdependency can create positive feedback loops. Any solution to the global challenges necessarily requires efforts in an environmentally sustainable manner that does not increase pollutants.

"The difference between what we do and what we are capable of doing would suffice to solve most of the world's problems."

This could be taken as an apt remark for our current situation. But now, it's our turn. The earth is our premise and yes, we do agree that these problems range from big to small, near to far, high to low. Naturally, anyone with a bit of spunk in them becomes aware of these problems and wants to solve them. At this point, most of the time, folks will dash off with the best of intentions and proceed to create a flood of new problems. But some don't. Those with a certain degree of smartness in them stop for a minute or two and ask the key question: "*How* do I solve the world's problems?" Of course, there are plenty of other forks in the road we could take here, just like "*Why* do you want to solve all the world's problems?" Or the responsibility question: "Is it really *your* responsibility to solve *all* the world's problems?" And of course, there's the good old "it's impossible" angle too.

Do you ever know that there are 6 trillion, 937 billion or so world problems in the world still waiting to be resolved? **So, how to solve all the world's problems?** It might even be *difficult*. It might even be harder than giving up sugar or watching daytime television. It might even be so difficult that it tests us to the very core of our being. **So,** if it's going to be that difficult, we're going to have to get in shape.

Not just physical shape. We need to be mentally and emotionally strong to be able to handle stress. We need a lot of virtues – courage and fortitude - so that we probably become more of a "character" that we are right now. So, we need to be sane, in touch with "reality" - no moral narcissism, no god complexes, no busybody syndrome, no martyr complexes, no raw lust for power, and so on. But it isn't solving all the world's problems yet. So, we'll keep going.

"Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself."   Leo Tolstoy

We need to base our happiness rather our success at this endeavour. But what should we base our happiness on, if not that? This is something else we'll have to investigate. This makes intuitive sense: if we try to "fix the world" without being "fixed" ourselves, we could well be going about it backwards.

A lot of signs point in this direction. Work on ourselves first; then work on "the world." And it is well said by Joseph Campbell: *"When we talk about settling the world's problems, we're barking up the wrong tree. The world is perfect. It's a mess. It has always been a mess. We are not going to change it. Our job is to straighten out our own lives."*

Regarding getting things done through other people, we can assume that we aren't going to be able to do this ourselves. After all, the world is full of people. So, we'll have to be pretty good at relationships to get much of anything done.

But the real problems are on the interior - we need to help consciousness evolve from egocentric to ethnocentric to world centric, or else people won't want to fix all those things in the exterior world to begin with!"

> *"To put the world in order, we must first put the nation in order;*
> *to put the nation in order, we must first put the family in order;*
> *to put the family in order; we must first cultivate our personal life;*
> *we must first set our hearts right."*　　　　　　　　　　 ― *Confucius*

Regarding the second aspect of understanding how the world really works before rushing out to save it: we must understand unintended consequences. It's a good rule of the thumb to assume that everything is always more complicated than we think it is. It's also good to assume that things don't ever turn out the way we expect them to. In other words, "expect the unexpected." Things won't go as planned.

So, what we're really saying is, first we need to *understand* the world by understanding the *nature* of the world. And to understand the nature, it means truly, deeply understanding what the world is, where it came from, why it came to be and what our place is in it. So, before we rush out to try to rearrange and remake everything, we need to understand who we are, why we're here, what our place is, what suffering is and what the right thing to do about it is. In other words, we must understand The Big Picture.

It seems to us that once we figure all *that* out, then the rest of the questions we touched on earlier - is the world fixable, whose responsibility it is to fix it, whether we should "fix it" at all, and if so, why - all those questions and answers, and more, should become clear as a result. Of course, figuring out "The Big Picture" is no small

feat. It might be even tougher than solving all the world's problems. It would require a lot of character and a lot of experiments. And in the end - who knows - it might even turn out to be more valuable.

"The one who has conquered himself is a far greater hero than he who has defeated a thousand times a thousand men."   *The Dhammapada*

When the time *to solve the problems* comes, it is getting your "to do" list together and prioritizing it. And once it's done, the journey of a thousand miles that began with a single step will be covered in no time.

Step well because if you are to a better Future, then disturb the present now.