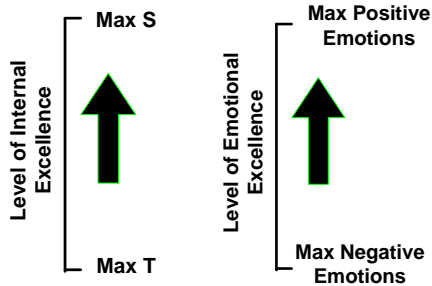


America at Crossroads?

Pradeep B. Deshpande

In the distant past, greatest of the great nations, for example, China, Egypt, India, Greece have eventually declined. Rise and decline occur because of the transformation of the societal level of internal excellence (see Figure 1) and the three components of the mindset it is comprised of. During the course of rise, the S component gains dominance but it cannot increase indefinitely and so, when it reaches its peak, the T component takes over and the society begins to decline. The T component cannot increase indefinitely either



- **Mindset Components:**
 - S: Truthfulness, honesty, steadfastness, equanimity
 - R: Attachment, bravery, ego, ambition, greed, desire to live
 - T: Lying, cheating, causing injury in words or deeds, sleep
- **Emotions:**
 - Positive Emotions:** Unconditional love, kindness, empathy, compassion
 - Negative Emotions:** Anger, hatred, hostility, despair, resentment, frustration, guilt, jealousy, fear, sorrow
- Positive emotions are strongly and positively correlated with the S component
- Negative emotions are strongly and positively correlated with R and T components

Figure 1. Internal Excellence Explained

and when it reaches its peak, the S component gains dominance and the society begins to rise again. This transformation leads to repeated rise and decline of nations. This has been true for thousands of years and will continue be so for the foreseeable future. These ideas are depicted in Figure 2. Taking Greece as an example, we collected the names of all persons born in Greece listed in the 1991 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica and plotted the data in Figure 3(a). The rise and decline of Greece is self-evident. The same information for the United States is depicted in Figure 3(b).

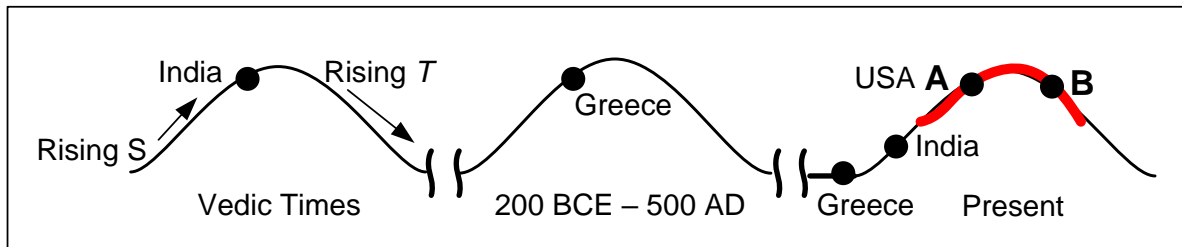


Figure 2. Transformation of the Mindset Components Induces Rise and Decline of Societies

This evidence leads to two questions: (1) Is the US at point A or Point B? And, (2) regardless, is intervention possible that will permit the US society to continue to rise or to keep the decline at bay longer? The answer to the first question is, only in hindsight is it possible to know whether the nation was at Point A or B at this



Figure 3(a). Rise and Decline of Greece

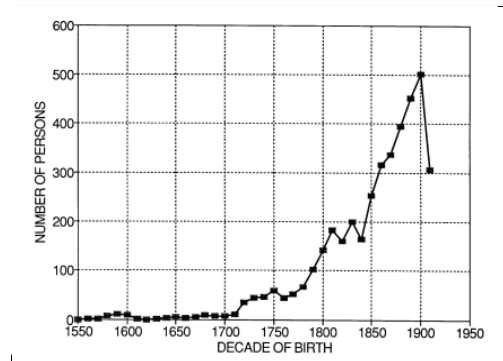


Figure 3(b). Rise of the United States

point in time and as to the second question, we need not be silent observers helplessly witnessing the decline occur right in front of our eyes. Intervention is definitely possible to keep the decline at bay longer although the eventual decline cannot be prevented as rise and decline are natural phenomena. For this, the society has to find a way to enhancing the average level of internal excellence and this in turn necessitates that the journey must begin at home with our individual selves. We have to change ourselves from within and this requires openness of mind and a desire to change for the better. Both are choices and are obstacles to progress.

There are two approaches to enhancing the level of internal excellence: A conscious approach wherein the three components and the two emotions are tracked diligently and regularly to insure that the S component remains high and nudges higher and R and T components remain low and nudge lower. A thirty-day self-assessment experiment can convince anyone that the conscious approach is necessary but not sufficient for progress. The sufficiency condition can be realized only when a process whose side-effect is a rise in the level of internal excellence is added. Ancient Eastern wisdom has known for millennia that meditation is such a process. The proof of concept is already on hand going by the substantial body of evidence reported in reputed science journals such as Nature, Science, and Proc. Nat. Acad. Sci.-US and by the long list of corporate CEOs and Nobel Laureates who meditate and who credit some of their successes to meditation.

An interesting example is the 2016 Chicago Cubs victory over the Cleveland Indians, ending a drought of 108 years. In the Time magazine article, How the Chicago Cubs Made World Series History, columnist Sean Gregory wrote: *"Epstein also set out to train his players' brain. The Cubs have a five-person mental skills team that offers mindfulness exercises, visualization drills, and meditation to all players throughout the organization. "The overriding philosophy is better humans make better players," says Josh Lifrak, who runs the program. Don't let the moment get too large. Catch yourself thinking bad, that's mindfulness. Not only knowledge, but action."*

In the language of the Science of Internal and External excellence, *"Catch yourself thinking bad, that's mindfulness"*, means conscious approaches to reining in the R, T components are necessary but not sufficient. The sufficiency condition is reached with meditation which the Cubs appear to have understood and demonstrated its veracity with the historical win. Josh Lifrak even stated as though he had read the referenced works, *"better humans make better players"* which in the language of the scientific framework translates into *"better humans make better students, better business leaders, better political leaders, and so on"* and the science of external and internal excellence is the way to achieve the goal.

The author first came to the United States over fifty years ago and enrolled as an undergraduate student at the University of Alabama at a time when the first African-American student was admitted and the then Governor George Wallace had unsuccessfully tried to deny entry to the student. In a first, an African-American young lady was crowned Miss University of Alabama in 1993. In 2008, an African-American was elected as President for the first time. In the intervening years, there has been all-round progress in virtually every sphere of activity catapulting the United States to the status of the sole super power in the world. Has all this progress left a significant portion of the population behind? Is the mounting evidence in the 2016 presidential election cycle an aberration and the situation will soon revert to normal or we are witnessing a long-term trend emerging right in front of our eyes? In either case, there is an urgent need for action, or rather inaction (meditation), whose purpose is to rein in our R and T components (negative emotions) in favor of the S component (positive emotions). This is the only path forward with prospects for success.

Further Reading

1. **Pradeep B. Deshpande, PhD and James P. Kowall, MD, PhD**, The Nature of Ultimate Reality and How It Can Transform Our World: Evidence from Modern Physics; Wisdom of YODA, 2015 (amazon).
2. **Arjun Walia Interviews Pradeep Deshpande on collective evolution**, <http://www.collective-evolution.com/2016/07/07/the-true-nature-of-what-we-perceive-as-reality-how-it-can-transform-or-world/>.