

INFORMATION, KNOWLEDGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

In the information Age, the word ‘knowledge’ is used in virtually all aspects of modern living. In fact, the information age is often called the ‘knowledge era,’ as people rarely differentiate between knowledge and information. “Knowledge is power” is commonly used but is an oft-abused cliché. With this presumption, the Information Age came with the promise of exponential growth in data, thus assuring infinite transparency and ubiquitous access to knowledge. These all should have translated into empowerment through knowledge – that an egalitarian society with access to information could hold society’s elites accountable. Following the mantra, the newly empowered educated masses would usher an age of wealth redistribution and world peace. Prior to 9-11 terror attack, even the phrase ‘Infinite justice’ was used as a sign that transparency will assure justice for all. Sadly, the opposite has happened. The Information Age, far from achieving these lofty expectations, has been marked with unprecedented economic extremism, incessant violence, and political disenfranchisement of the general population. How is this possible? This paradox is solved with a brief review of the history of knowledge.

Every ancient civilization had clear vision of what constitutes knowledge. In ancient Greece, the word *philosophy* meant ‘love of knowledge or wisdom’. In ancient China, the word ‘prophet’ meant the first one to know, thus making seeking and gathering knowledge a prophetic quality. In Islam, seeking knowledge, and living and disseminating it is a divine command. While the notion of knowledge being empowerment still persists, the very definition of knowledge has been corrupted in modern era. It is no surprise that rarely anyone speaks of this subject. Our research shows that disconnection between true knowledge and perception of ‘knowledge’ started with the redefinition of what is true. The truth criterion, which was known and talked about ancient philosophers and savants from all civilizations and summarized by prophet Muhammad’s revolution in the 7th century, has reduced the notion of objective truth into subjective perception, touted as ‘truth’. As a result, society in general has lost the handle on truth and falsehood, the most important victim being the education system (See Jaan Islam, 2018). Therefore, any modern university must be committed to creating an open platform, where everyone of us can disseminate, and share true knowledge with others to empower our lifestyle and sustainable living. This platform was once promised at the dawn of the Information Age as the social media companies were mushrooming all around. Sadly, history tells us they have become the sinister arm of the so-called US Deepstate.

On the contrary, few can argue that humanity has succeeded on its path of harmony with nature. Ever since the onset of plastic culture in the late 19th century, the world has embarked onto a destructive path confronting every natural pathway. Meanwhile, some 300,000 patents are issued annually in USA alone, many involving energy management through ‘better chemistry’, all claiming some sort of improvement with regards to sustainability. After spending billions of dollars in research, scientists could not even agree on the existence of global warming, let alone agreeing on its cause. The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed another vulnerability to the equation as the hoax of ‘settled science’ has been exposed to full extent. Only recently, even the age of the universe is estimated to be double of what it was before. That happened after the age of the earth was revised from 1 billion to 4 billion. All current events show that the ‘science’ (called Science by Islam et al., 2022) has become a cult that is firmly placed in the pocket of the corporate overlords with Big Pharma, Big Tech and Military Industrial Complex leading the way. Sadly, even Nobel laureate scientists (e.g. Nobel Chemistry Laureate Robert Curl) are calling out the currently used technology

development mode as a ‘technological disaster’. Today’s civilization is synonymous with a gloomy outlook of climate crisis, economic extremism, and global instability.

Driven by utilitarianism, today’s civilization is based on an economic framework that maximizes short-term profitability, while rest of the planning is made surrounding this framework. In order to justify the conclusions already made by academicians and tech CEOs alike, many have sought to maximize short-term profitability at a heavy cost to nature. Of course, as long as the accountability can be pushed beyond the immediate quarter, all is ‘safe’ and ‘legit’. In the current age, companies routinely buy off scientists, who are instructed to devise theories and procedure to produce results that show the desired conclusion has the best chance to appeal to the stakeholders, funding agencies, and other investors.

The core of today’s ‘technological disaster’ is rooted in two major flaws in human cognition, namely, (1) Absence of criteria for determining truth and falsehood; and (2) Absence of a standard. In absence of a universal standard, we do not even know how to distinguish progress from decline, let alone measure it. At this point, we do not know whether population growth – the existence of human life – is a good or bad thing. We do not even know whether Carbon – the essence of life – is a blessing or a curse. Everything seems to be a puzzle and scientists keep contradicting each other, no matter what the research question is or the data indicate. Yet, all these are phenomena of the plastic era, which is barely a century old. At no time, the Pharaohs, who showed miraculous technological prowess, suffered from toxic shock of the chemicals they used. At no time those mountain-curved palace dwellers of Petra Valley or the Thamud, who created the most spectacular feats in technology had to inhale toxic fumes emerging as a by product of their engineering. Those technologies had no toxic outcome. Today, we have millions of technologies but none can claim such an outcome. Have we digressed over the last few millennia and we cannot fathom anything beyond minimizing toxic shock?

Every day, headlines appear showing us that we have never had to deal with more unsustainable technologies. How can this spiralling down path be changed? Who could possibly come to rescue? The government? Meanwhile, a New York Times (May 11, 2015) headline reads: “All Politicians Lie. Some Lie More Than Others.” When policy makers lie, there appears to be no recourse of escape from a process that has been severely corrupted.

British poet, William Shenstone (1714–1763) famously pointed out, “A liar begins with making falsehood appear like truth, and ends with making truth itself appear like falsehood.” What we have is ubiquitous presence of falsehood in every field of knowledge. With economics (more accurately, ‘profiteering’) being the driver and energy being the vehicle of this civilization, the falsehood that prevails in economic and energy sectors are the most consequential. It alone can cause the economic extremism that the world is experiencing today. Without a paradigm shift we have no way to move forward.

This paradigm shift must start with the economic models. The concept of value that represented long-term interest rather than short-term profiteering must be brought back. Doing good must be made to be equivalent to doing good business. Adding real value must be translated into value addition in economic terms. Intangible aspects, such as long-term effects, environmental impact, environmental justice, and community-based economics must be the foundational parameters for economic – and thus scientific – considerations.

Science has always been about knowledge of history – as distinctly apart from ‘history written by the victor’. The narrative of moral and material progress defining of modernity overlooks the severe degeneration of morality and even natural science over the past three-hundred years. In every sector, from chemical engineering to medicine, we have been taken on a rollercoaster ride, each time being promised of a less toxic outcome after the latest disaster. Every year, after hundreds of chemicals are deemed incompatible with sustainability, thousands of new ones are introduced, promising better outcome. The vicious cycle continues as the environmental integrity spirals down to yet another nadir. Yet, solutions to this crisis are staring at us all the time. The year Einstein patented his famed Einstein cycle, which could be coupled with direct solar energy to make environment-friendly refrigeration cycle (as shown by Khan and Islam, 2016), the world instead opted to choose Freon. The promise was the leak due to Freon was ‘negligible’ – because it cannot be detected, it therefore does not exist. Fast-forward several decades, we observe that the history of modern science was nothing but a series of crises and post-hoc rationalisations that would lead to the ‘climate emergency’ we are experiencing today (See, for instance, Islam and Khan, 2019). Real science and sustainability deals with technologies that emulate natural processes and eliminate artificial chemicals or energy sources every step of the way. Such technologies can be discovered in combating gas hydration, corrosion, waste conversion, water desalination, all employing zero-waste technologies. this is a new way of thinking and discovery that can be adopted in all scientific disciplines.

In this platform under Nature Science University, we disseminate true knowledge -knowledge of the truth – this being of 1) truthful source; 2) truthful narrator; and 3) real science. Long-term sustainability is assured at every step. As such, our courses/lessons all have a section on logic, so participants can develop and then build on the correct cognitive tool. We do not teach dogma, nor do we regurgitate ‘settled science’. Every subject will empower participants with cognitive skills, giving her the ability to discern knowledge from ignorance, truth from falsehood and real information from propaganda.

Citations

- 1) Islam, Jaan (2018). *Political Philosophy in the East and West: In Search of Truth*. Vernon Press, <https://vernonpress.com/book/363>
- 2) Islam, M.R. and Khan, M.M. (2019). *Science of Climate Change*, Wiley-Scrivener, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/book/10.1002/9781119522850>
- 3) Islam, M.R., Monaf, J., and Islam, A.O. (2023) *Greening of Pharmaceutical Engineering Vol. 4: Applications for Physical Disorder Treatments*, Scrivener-Wiley, <https://www.scrivenerpublishing.com/cart/title.php?id=757>
- 4) Khan, M.M. and Islam, M.R. (2016). *Zero Waste Engineering: A New Era of Sustainable Technology Development*, 2nd Edition, Wiley-Scrivener, <https://www.wiley.com/en-ca/Zero+Waste+Engineering%3A+A+New+Era+of+Sustainable+Technology+Development%2C+2nd+Edition-p-9781119184898>