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**Development beyond Europe**

For a long time it had been a widely held belief that only people in Europe could excel in science and technology. It was perhaps because of the fact that all the bastions of knowledge, research and critical thinking were located there. Free thinking was one of the factors that helped Europe develop, leaving other continents behind. It is also argued that its benign dictators, enlightened monarchs and knowledge-loving aristocrats patronised the men of learning that transformed the European society.

Many historians argue that it was this attitude of the European ruling elite that pulled the continent out of the darkness of ignorance and abyss of superstition. In some parts of the continent, the sagacious rulers of princely states encouraged the flourishing of philosophy, science, arts and other subjects that turned out to be instrumental in the development of the region. The enlightened rulers of Italian city states were patrons of art and culture. Their patronage encouraged artists from all over Europe to work tirelessly for the creation of masterpieces of art.

Rulers elsewhere in the region also accorded great respect to curious minds that pondered over the mysteries of nature, coming up with ideas that challenged the existing orthodoxy and religious bigotry. Despite being under the influence of the feudal elite and the superstitious clergy, some European rulers managed to lay the foundations of a culture that paved the way for scientific development and economic prosperity.

Since the ruling elite in the East was despotic and not ready to tolerate any criticism or allow any critical thinking, it was assumed that the East would never rise. With the help of scientific development, the West had also modernized its weaponry, turning the once weak continent into an invincible region. The abode of white races that was threatened by the Turks and other powers was now threatening the world with its military might and scientific knowledge that was not available to other groups of people in the world.

Prior to the advent of industrial revolution, the West had already captured 35 percent of the world, bringing 80 percent of humanity under its domination before the end of World War II. The mighty Chinese empire that had been dominant for more than 1400 years succumbed to the Western pressure, offering its borders for the free market.

The mighty rulers of this giant country had to face a century of humiliation. Many believe that it was because of the contemptuous rejection of modernization on the part of the Chinese ruling elite that led to its humiliation. The powerful state of the East that contributed more than 20 percent of global GDP in the 18th century was reduced to a market of raw materials for the West.

India that also had a glorious history was humbled by what once used to be an overcrowded and impoverished continent. The mighty Mughal Empire that once ruled large swathes of the Subcontinent was confined to a few areas of Delhi. The golden sparrow that would contribute more than 25 percent to global GDP before the arrival of Western influence was pushed towards an economic disaster, contributing a meagre five percent to the global economic growth in 1947.

So, Western invincibility seemed to be capturing the minds of people everywhere in the world in the 18th, 19th and early decades of the 20th centuries. However, this notion of invincibility was challenged by the rise of Japan that threatened the mighty Russian Empire and other western powers as well. The industrial growth that gradually started in Japan in the 1870s and 1880s picked pace within no time, with the Japanese capitalists scrambling for markets.

The search for markets prompted them to capture neighbouring states and parts of China, turning them into a dominant regional power that did not jeopardize the interests of the Western colonial powers in the region but beyond as well. The interests of the British in India were threatened by Japan, prompting the people of the colonized world to heap praises on the rising Asian power and giving them confidence that the East could also rise and that development outside the West was also possible.

The stunning progress of China over the last four decades has also convinced many that scientific development is possible outside the West. The communist country has made tremendous strides in the economic field as well as in science and technology. From its high speed train to its adventure in space, from the 5G technology to the development of vaccines, the story of China is brimming with successes. The elimination of extreme poverty from the most populous nation in the world indicates that Beijing will not just overtake the US in the world of business and finance only but living standards as well.

Progress and scientific development in various parts of the world has a special message for the Muslim world that is still running after retrogressive elements and following obscurantist forces. If we analyse the pattern of development across the world, we will notice that abolition of feudalism, defeat of rigid forces and a conducive environment for free, independent and critical thinking were some of the factors that were instrumental in helping states and countries develop. Turkey and Bangladesh made tremendous strides in various fields after battling retrogressive forces of their societies, pumping a significant portion of their budget into education. The two countries also embraced the Western ideas of critical thinking, reducing the influence of the clergy that had been holding back their development.

Saudi Arabia and other states are trying to modernize their education system while also trying to diversify their economy. Riyadh is not only trying to establish a new city with an investment of around $400 billion but also trying to undermine the influence of the clergy that has been one of the greatest impediments in the development of scientific thinking in several parts of the Muslim world as well. The recent liberal reforms in the kingdom augur well for both the citizens of Saudi Arabia and the larger Muslim world as well that looks to Riyadh for leadership and guidance.

If Saudi Arabia and other rich Arab states invest in education and scientific research, there is no reason to believe that the Muslim world cannot catch up with the West in the field of science and technology.

Pakistan, being one of the most populous countries of the Muslim world, could also play a crucial role in the scientific advancement of Muslim states. The country is gifted with creative minds that can demonstrate excellent skills in innovative methods of creation if they are given opportunities. If the rich Muslim states are not able to produce a large number of scientists, researchers, astronomers and inventors that are instrumental in the development of modern world, they should at least throw their financial backing behind those Muslim countries that are capable of producing such individuals but lack funding and resources.

The development of China and other Asian countries indicates that we can also make strides in economy, science and technology if we invest in research and innovative ways. Technology cannot be dominated by one power for a long time; with the help of required knowledge other powers and states can also acquire it. The history of inventions in one part of the world and their transfer in other parts of the world clearly indicate that scientific knowledge cannot be monopolized.

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