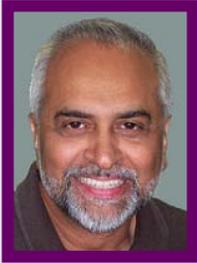


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The Cancer Of – Divisive Politics, Race and Religion



It is demoralizing to be witness to the constant state of banal human conflict in this World, most of it based on political and religious manipulation, the rest based on age old bigotry, exploitation and sheer ignorance.

It is inconceivable and incomprehensible that in this day and age political, religious, community and institutional leaders can so easily incite and focus the people on the superficial differences of others, and have them totally ignore the commonality of all human beings. And as a result widen the gulf between people rather than promote understanding, acceptability and tolerance, both inside and outside the national boundaries.



Under the tutelage and influence of 'leaders' that they choose to listen to, people are willing to see others, who are different in some way, as undesirable, unwanted, and as a potential threat, and therefore to be lived apart from, or actively destroyed (as in genocides). The leaders that preach and practice discrimination and hate can be parents, family members, friends or country, institutional and community heads. This willingness to be led rather than question the insanity of such views, makes otherwise normal people, willing participants to the cancer of divisiveness.

The fear of others was understandable in darker and more ignorant times, when we didn't know much about all the different people on this planet, and when we didn't know our planet's place in the solar system, but were ignorant and superstitious - and thus afraid. Now that we have known better for so long, surely we can get past the suspicion and fear of others on this planet, and work to teach greater acceptance, co-operation, and productive cohabitation for our own good.

Humans, for all their vaunted brain power, do not act in a particularly intelligent manner. In spite of the obvious reality staring them in the face, they still stubbornly and determinedly hang on to destructive points of view and outmoded traditions. This is the 21st century, when overall knowledge, scientific and technological breakthroughs have given us an unparalleled overview that we as a species are homogeneous, and live on a 'less-than-a-speck' of a planet, in a Universe whose sheer size, power and mystery renders our entire solar system, let alone us, so insignificant that if we had any real sense of our own reality, scale and importance, in the general scheme of things, we would be constantly and eternally mortified.



Instead, we humans have a sense of self-importance as individuals in this Universe that is nothing less than ludicrous. We still believe in a very real sense that the entire Universe revolves around us. And just as in the dark ages in Europe the Church persecuted and condemned to death for heresy, anyone daring to suggest that the earth actually revolved around the sun, and that the earth was not the centre of the solar system, similarly anyone suggesting that ALL people are absolutely the same and that all political, religious and cultural differences, constantly highlighted and vigorously promoted by our 'leaders', are exclusively for the benefit of those in power, and not for the benefit for the people, is labeled a heretic, unpatriotic, a traitor to his or her country,

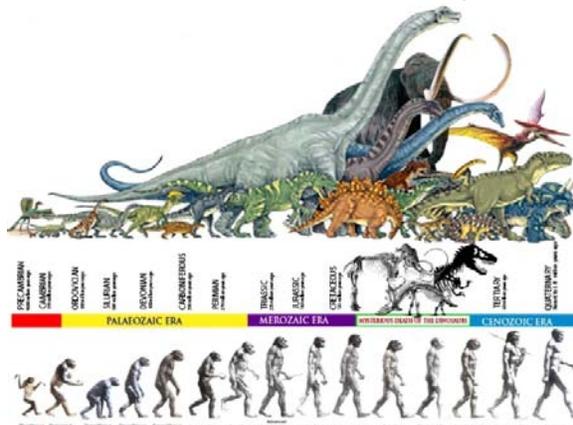
The Cancer Of – Divisive Politics, Race and Religion

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religion, community and family, and therefore to be persecuted and treated like a pariah.

In authoritarian political and religious regimes even today, anyone bold enough to question or resist the promoted dogma still faces the possibility of execution. But the only reason these regimes and leaders manage to stay in power and continue to mislead is because of people's willingness and preference to believe in the lie, that they are different from others in any meaningful way.

The history of human existence upon this earth as homo-sapiens (*our 'species'*) is relatively short, estimated by scientists to be approximately 200,000 years old, as compared to the earth itself which is estimated to be about 4.3 billion years old.



As a dominant species we can measure our time in some tens of thousands of years, compared to a number of other species, particularly the dinosaurs, who managed to survive and rule this planet for hundreds of millions of years. The way we as a species live together, in constant conflict, including the systemic destruction of our environment, it is quite probable that we will not last as a species for an infinitesimal fraction of the time that the dinosaurs did. The dinosaurs managed to dominate, live and thrive for over 700 million years, as compared to us, as we have been dominate for only a few thousand years. And, they probably did it without the endless arguments and conflicts about political, religious, ethnic and cultural differences that we so constantly and destructively engage in. If we as a species do not accept our oneness and veer strongly towards mutual co-operation rather than the persistent conflict that we so readily indulge in, at the encouragement of our leaders, we as an irrational species will not exist for long (*we haven't been here long, only 0.004% of the earth's history*).

Our sense of self-importance, and ego-centered view, makes us want to differentiate between

ourselves, rather than acknowledge the absolute sameness of all people, except for the superficial differences, such as colour, culture, religion and geographical location. This ego of ours willing to be manipulated by those for whom dividing people serves a special purpose, usually a bid for control and power, makes us an ignorant and complicit instruments of fear, hate and loathing, ready to inflict suffering and damage on those who we consider, under advice or active exhortation, as different.

These feelings of animosity and suspicion are a learned response, not a natural one, because if small children of different races and backgrounds are kept together, without anyone telling them of any differences between them, they do not see the difference. Those of us who grew up as children with others of widely different backgrounds, racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and political, did not focus on the differences but instead found all that was common in us, and to this day some 45 years after graduating from school, where diversity of every kind among students was fully accepted and encouraged, we still hold the school and our friends and fellow students in the greatest affection (*Wynberg Allen, Mussoorie, India*).



And after school, as we scattered all over India and the World, the vast majority of us continued to automatically focus on people's sameness instead of emphasizing the differences, a blessing that will always pay dividends, derived from the foresight and open mindedness of our parents and the school educators.

Unfortunately this experience and outlook in the 21st century seems to be a rarity rather than the common practice that it should be, the lack of it creates ongoing misery for hundreds of millions in this World, while serving the manipulating few.

In India, after independence, once the common enemy the 'British' left, Indians went back to being fractured along religious, ethnic, caste and political lines, with the consistent and backward looking

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HOW DO YOU VIEW
YOURSELF?

BY NATIONALITY?

BY STATE OR
PROVINCE?

BY RELIGION?

BY ETHNICITY?

BY CASTE?

BY TRIBE?

BY LANGUAGE?

BY POSITION?

BY PROFESSION?

policies of the same type of leaders that had kept Indians divided and weak throughout most of its recent history. The current political climate of India is toxic with its political parties solidly formed along religious, caste, ethnic and regional lines with no unifying national vision. With most 'leaders' lacking any true leadership qualities based on real public service, they are doing what they know best, which is to divide and conquer their constituents by practicing 'them-against-us' politics.

India being a seriously 'religious' country, the religious leaders behave in basically the same vein as their political counterparts, making sure the differences in religious philosophy is highlighted, and any recognition of any similarity of thought is severely discouraged, and labeled as 'soul damning heresy!'. So in today's India people view themselves as Hindu, or Muslim (*second largest population of Muslims in the World are in India*), Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jain etc., then as the various castes (*too many to tackle*), and then as ethnic groups, and then as Indians. And that is how a majority of Indian leadership likes it, as it gives them many divisive causes both religious and political, to run on and appeal to, and use the resulting division and suspicion to grab and maintain their power.

In the Middle East for the past centuries the conflicts have been based on tribal, cultural, regional and religious lines. While the majority of the Middle Eastern geographical region is Islamic, the division, acrimony and suspicion between the Sunni and Shia sects, two of the largest sects in Islam, constantly fanned by the leadership of these respective sects and by other vested parties, have made conflicts with other religions and cultures pale in comparison. Probably more Muslim people are killed by other Muslim people than by other religious groups, and the bombing of mosques and other important and sacred religious sites of one Muslim group by another has tragically become commonplace news. Today, the conflict between Muslim countries and others, such as Israel, the U.S. and other countries, is a relatively recent phenomenon, when compared to the conflict of Muslims verses Muslims, which stretches back centuries.

Currently, in a country as tolerant as Canada, where people from all over the World, of diverse backgrounds, racial and religious differences, are a living embodiment of peaceful and productive cohabitation, we now have a government in the Province of Quebec that came to power identifying with the cultural, racial and language difference of

the francophone community, in the Province and the Country. Recently the government has stirred up great controversy by proposing a ban on the wearing of all religious symbols in government jobs. This proposal has led to active, vocal and passionate demonstrations in the Province. While the government denies that it is discriminating against non-francophone citizens/residents of the Province, its unwillingness to take down all Christian/catholic symbols in government buildings gives some credence to the charges of discrimination. The fact that a recent poll showed the popularity of this Party having gone up since the controversy, speaks to the political party using the well worn tactic of divisiveness to bolster support. Succumbing to the temptation of 'politics of differentiation and disunity' puts the Quebec government on par with all the other such governments in the World who use divisiveness as a substitute for the bankruptcy of any real productive and progressive ideas. It really is sinking down to the level of inciting peoples fear and suspicion of others that are different, and thereby showing their own deep and imbedded insecurity.

In the United States the ugliness of the division between the two political ideologies, the Republicans and the Democrats, has not only been apparent to the rest of the World but has threatened to tear asunder the fabric of social and political fabric of the self promoting bastion of democracy, equality and individual freedom. Which only goes to show that even in the most prosperous, advanced and relatively educated country in the World, generally informed people of all levels and stripes are willing to be readily led astray by the division causing rhetoric and propaganda of its political leadership and special interest groups. It is the American people who choose to ignore the overwhelming commonality of interest, purpose and acceptance that had made America great in the first place, and now choose to focus on the differences in the political ideologies, regardless of how damaging it is to their country, themselves, and their children's future.

The willingness of people around the World to listen to, and take to heart as a truth, the divisive propaganda of their leaders, and then to participate in the discrimination and hateful conflicts of the current times, is inexcusable and a cancer: "something evil that spreads destructively".