



## Contrary to Current Conventional Concepts We Are NOT Sliding Down a Slippery Slope

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*"We are going to make the case that the world is getting better"* Bill Gates

This paper is based mainly on the Empirical Data collected over the years spent on my **Education**: obtaining degrees in **Science**: [Medical Microbiology & Chemistry] at St. Xavier's College, Bombay University, India: [B.S. (Honors), M.S. (Research) and the Doctorate]; and in **Business**: [International Business: Management & Marketing] at Pace University, New York, U.S.A.: [Executive MBA & Doctorate: D.P.S- for which I received the President's Award for Academic Achievement]. My **Academic Experience** includes decades of Tertiary Teaching at the Graduate and Undergraduate levels, including *inter alia*, Involvement as an Advisor of Business Students. I was also the Academic Chair of the School of Business (>7 years), and Chair of the Academic Standards Committee (4 years), at **Dowling College. At Briarcliffe College, Long Island, N.Y.**, I was the Chair of the Academic Standards Committee; and also a member of its Board of Trustees (**both for over 2 decades**). Even as a student I was the Academic Advisor to local students in my Community in Bombay. I am also the Co-Founder and Faculty Advisor of the Delta Pi Chapter of Dowling College for over *Thirty years*. This Chapter is an integral part of Delta Mu Delta, the International Honor Society for students of Business Administration. I am also a Scholarship Judge of D.M.D. For the past *fifteen years*, I obtain valuable first-hand information of the different countries and cultures, by attending and participating in Global Academic Conferences (two or one every year). [At some of these Conferences I have been appointed as a *Discussant and/or Group Leader*] in different countries. In the United States: (at Harvard University, New York City, Washington D.C., Chicago; and also in Puerto Rico); and in Jamaica. In Europe, [(U.K.: Oxford & Cambridge Universities), Italy: Rome, and Spain]; In Canada: (Vancouver) and also in Australia: (Sydney). These Conferences include, *inter alia*, the meeting of International Academics, exchanging experiences and ideas; collecting and sharing information that helps to make a comparative study of select countries and cultures. My earlier **Technical Work Experience** included: Microbiology Quality Control Manager at Bristol Myers, N.Y., Quality Control Management at Pfizer, Bombay; and as a Hospital Administrator: Medical Board of Directors & Medical Staff at Downstate Medical Center, New York, while I was studying at Pace University in Downtown N.Y.



1. **Introduction:** Reading or listening to the news, the published data and situations all around us, results in an almost convincing case of dissatisfaction and reduced pride in the country of which we have always been so proud in the past. What has happened? We begin to wonder. Naturally the Blame Game becomes a way of life. We blame the economy, the weather, the pollution problems, the neighborhood in which we live, the schools, the teachers and the administration; we even blame our enhanced technological environment; and the list goes on and on. The floods, wildfires, tornadoes and other natural disasters all make the situation even worse. We complain; but have we ever thought of tracking issues to find the etiology of our dissatisfaction? Well, we seem to neglect one very important source: we avoid looking at the mirror. Perhaps that will give us a good start.

At this point in time I am tempted to think about the little Dutch boy who saved his country, Holland, from a major disaster. Rather than complain and criticize the situation in which he found himself; as we seem to do today; he clenched his tiny fist, covered it with his small handkerchief, sat on the spot, blocking the tiny leak with his covered fist. He was hungry and sleepy; but he stayed on till his parents, looking for him, found him, tired, hungry and sleepy; but steadfastly sticking to his duty to save his country. He was then relieved of his duty; but only after he was sure that he had succeeded. He had managed to prevent a major flood disaster, by blocking the tiny leak. We too can help prevent the perceived downward trend that seems to be our problem today.

We can help. We all have strengths in different fields, (Education, Health Care, Home Care, Teaching the English Language, Help in filling forms; these are some that usually come to mind). We can volunteer to share some of our *strengths* with those in need. Spending a few hours a week, will certainly be a great help to individuals initially; and later, to our Country. The obvious ever-growing disparity between the Haves and the Have-Nots may also improve because of our help.

2. **Education:** No one can dispute the fact that we have held the **#1** position in Education for decades. People from all over the world (myself included) have come to our country to enhance their education and improve their career opportunities and their Quality of Life. In most situations this is indeed true. However, the situation seems to be very different today. There are reasons for this change; but before we curse the consuming darkness, let us weigh the facts. Our demographic data will reveal that we have a major decline in the number of children available for admission in our schools. In colleges and universities the situation is more severe. *Developing countries* do not have this problem. They do not have the problem of a reduced population of young children and youth, (who are potential students); that we in the west have. **Some of the institutions of education** there are actually raising their Admission Academic Standards to admit only the best from the very large number of their student applicants.



In the west our schools, colleges and universities are mainly *tuition driven*; and so they are compelled to look for and find a number of good students to fill their classes. This is not easy at all. We have lived through decades of our decision to limit the size of our families; and as a result, we now experience a *shortage* of young people available for academic admission. Whereas we do have an urgent need of pupils and students to fill our classes, we find it extremely difficult to obtain the required number available for admission. In an attempt to achieve this need, we have decided to open our admission doors **wide**. This results in reducing our Admission Academic Standards, as we plan to accept any student, as long as the *check did not bounce*. If this is the decision to solve our present problem, it is indeed the **worst one**. It has several major built-in problems. It is a quick, easy and erroneous way to solve a serious long term issue. By concentrating solely on the admission problem, the main issues that were overlooked get magnified. Most of the newly-accepted young recruits, who were admitted because of our dire need to fill our classes, hail from foreign countries. They consider English as a Foreign Language with which they are uncomfortable.

The English language is the medium of our Education system. Hence the recently accepted students, who were born in foreign countries in which their mother tongue was not English; and also, their script was very **different; they will have problems. They will find that writing, comprehension and speaking in the English** language is extremely difficult for them. English is a language that is mastered mainly with regular use, rather than with stipulated rules. These young people are really nice individuals; but in the absence of good communication skills, the backbone of our Education System, their grades are very poor. As a result of their poor grades, the Academic Standards of our Education system, of which they are now a part, has dropped considerably. Our biggest mistake was lowering the Admission Academic Standards to fill our classes. Teaching students with a language handicap is indeed very difficult. Marking their papers is an even bigger problem; made much worse if these students are admitted into our Management, Marketing and similar subject classes for the MBA degree, that demand reading, writing and comprehension in the English language.

Most people believe that when one graduates with a degree, one has an education. This is not true at all; for even Thermometers and Barometers have degrees; but can we say that they have an Education? Our Graduation Ceremony is referred to as a Commencement Ceremony. Doesn't that say something to us? It is certainly not the **Finale**. In an attempt at improving ourselves, and our Country, we must realize that our education has to be *refreshed* and *revived* on a *regular basis*, so that we will continue to enhance our Education, and bring back our Country's Academic Standards to the **#1** position we held for decades. Today, in the era of Globalization, being **#1** in every way we know is of paramount importance. We must realize and always remember that our new competition will include students from different parts of the world; having majored in a variety of different disciplines, and excelled in special subjects which were not offered



to us. As we attempt to compete with these *Global* students, we must constantly be aware that it is imperative that we do our very best *at all times*; realizing that in this Global Environment it must be our objective to achieve that **#1** position once again.

Obtaining a College or University Degree is certainly something of which we can be proud. But do we remember the issues and subjects that we learned for that degree? What about our study habits? Did we belong to the group of students who followed the proverbial last minute studying that made them forget most of the subject matter at the time of the examination, or perhaps, a few days or weeks later? This obviously results in a low grade, far below our expectations! In these times of Global Involvement, a really good grade is absolutely essential at the time when we are looking for an initial position, or a promotion at a later date. Good study habits and the right choice of selected subjects will be reflected in the depth of our knowledge at the time we are interviewed by our future management personnel. Realizing the importance of a Good Grade in carefully selected subjects, and succeeding, can we say that we are Management Material? Will we be able to *step in* as and when the occasion arises? That will involve much more: *Good Manners, Social Graces and Social Responsibility* are expected too.

We must remember that a good Education teaches us to *respect* our superiors at work, the members of our Family, our subordinates, our competitors, and our Customers; and above all, ourselves; so that we will avoid being involved in anything, of which we would be ashamed at a later date, and which could be an impediment to our future progress. Our Education must make us more *marketable*, especially in this Global environment; it must help us to *improve all forms of our communication skills*, and enable us *to accept and understand people from other cultures*, making us *Socially Responsible, Ethical in all our dealings*, and above all, *reject Prejudice* in every way, at all times.

**3. Communication Skills:** The English language is the medium of Higher Education and International Communication; so we in the United States are among the people in the world, who are in a position of advantage; even though the nuances of the English language vary in the different English speaking countries. It is important to note the differences in specific settings of words: as connotation, pronunciation, and spelling.

Unlike most languages in which rules and specific vocabulary are extremely important, the English language has accepted words from other languages: Latin, French, Italian, German, Hindi, and rather recently, technical terms, and even some *slang* expressions. All this has resulted in *enriching* the English language. People who have been accustomed to using a different script, and/or those whose initial language depended on *rules*, find it very difficult to *write* in the English language: When they realize the importance of the use of the *definite article*, they start using it indiscriminately; even before the *proper* names of people. The one sure way to help improve one's communication skills in the English language is by regular reading and regular usage.



Whereas most people will readily admit their inability to speak and understand other languages: French, Latin, Italian, German, Spanish, Chinese or Portuguese, very few individuals will admit their inability in speaking and understanding in the English language.

Local people have little or no problem speaking in the English language; their main problems are Spellings and Grammar. Since English is their *only* language in most cases, one wonders how, after spending years in High School and College, they still have problems in Spellings and Grammar!

Managers must be good communicators; without it, subordinates, super-ordinates, peers and customers would have to imagine or guess what the message is, and end by being wrong on most, or all situations.

All forms of communication: Speaking, reading, writing, comprehension, listening and body language are essential as we attempt to get back our **#1** position in a Global society. Surprisingly, the unspoken word, *Body Language*, is often referred to as being more vocal than the spoken word. It is believed to be unplanned and natural to most people; and as a result, reveals more than is intended. Unfortunately, it has been noted that Managers in general, are in dire need of Good *Listening* skills. American managers must work on this issue, in their effort to regain our **#1** position.

There is only one way to improve *Writing* skills, and that is: by writing. We aim at being **#1** again; so it is essential that we improve our writing skills; as in a **#1** position, messages will necessarily be sent to and received from leaders of other nations. Managers who have problems writing, make every effort to avoid sending written messages, so that their weakness will not be noted. This is only helping them to perpetuate the problem. Being *good communicators* is a quality expected of all managers. They must, in addition, always be Fair, Flexible, Firm initially, with a plan to relax as they get to know their people, have Faith in them; be Frank and Honest at all times. Learning to *speak* in the language of co-workers, subordinates, customers, and also, Associates from other cultures, may be expected of American and other leaders.

**4. Technology:** Our technological advances have made us the envy of people everywhere; notably in medicine and different aspects of medical, electronics, computer, space, grain, agriculture, and food technology. We have also excelled in the film, music and many other industries. Failing attempts to emulate us, *Piracy* has become a major industry in China and some developing countries. What is done in these days, we believe, is that in each situation, just *one* specific American product is purchased. Every attempt is made to make a product that *seems* to be similar. No doubt it *appears* to be similar; but in reality, it is inferior to the original American product: the quality is inferior, and it is much cheaper, because of the lower salaries of the people



who manufacture the products there. The product is NOT a good imitation; it also has a shorter shelf life. This confirms the fact that American technology is still the envy of people everywhere. This claim is endorsed also by the number of Nobel prizes awarded to American citizens. Of all this we are indeed really proud. And yet, we were not the first in the Space Race; but we are the *First to land on the moon*, and plant *Old Glory* securely on the surface of the moon. In recent years we have reduced our Research Budget to cope with our current financial situation. We are glad and proud to state that our financial and our employment situations have certainly improved now. We are sure that with hard work and the special blessings of the Good Lord, we will soon be **#1** again. We are almost there.

**5. Outstanding Individuals:** Without any hesitation it must be stated that in the United States we have had, and continue to have, a number of really outstanding individuals for decades. We have a list of Foundations created by some super individuals. Like many others they were people of great wealth, belonging to the Upper-Upper Class in Society. Here we may include the outstanding ones: Ford, Rockefeller, Carnegie, and other Foundations. For decades they have been very generous with their wealth, leaving very large amounts to reward people, with less fortune, for their specific Academic success. Financial provisions were reserved by them for the students of the day, and for decades to come. This group includes mainly people with old family money. However, this group did not include the more generous individuals like Bill Gates Senior and Junior, and Melinda, and also, Warren Buffet. They are the philanthropists of today. This group includes people who are more People - Oriented. There are in this world today and in the past too; people of similar financial status; but who hold on to their wealth, with no regard for those less fortunate. They are to be found in many countries all over the world; especially in places where people in their own and other countries too, are starving. This prompted Mrs. Sonia Gandhi to say to Mr. Bill Gates as she met him on one of his trips to India, to help the very poor children there, with life-saving medication. She said to him, "In India we too have a number of very wealthy families – but they lack the *Spirit of Giving*, so characteristic of people like you. We do not find the generosity and caring anywhere else in the world, as is the case in the United States of America. Your country is way ahead of the rest, in generosity and basic human kindness and caring." Warren Buffet has merged his major donations with those of Bill Gates; with no name declaration. This is indeed the essence of *real Charity*.

Bill Gates and Melinda are hopeful for the world's poor. In his 16-page letter he states that clearly: "We are going to make the case that the world is getting better, and that in two decades it will be better still". He says that many countries such as China, India, Brazil and even Botswana, now have growing economies. Foreign aid helps poor countries. He believes also that diseases like measles, tuberculosis, small pox, and

even polio, can be eliminated; and that Health Aid is a great investment. Only a great and caring American like Bill Gates has managed to help people all over the world with



life-saving medicines, inoculations, vaccinations and other medications. He has also gifted young people in need, with the tools to enhance their technical education potential.

It must be stated here that there are many more such caring Americans today. They give of themselves as volunteers; they give lavish donations in cash and kind, to special groups and to general causes. To mention just an ***incomplete, limited, on-going list***, will highlight the fact that we are certainly NOT sliding down a slippery slope: [A few outstanding international individuals are intentionally included here]:

*Nelson Mandela*, two former American Presidents: Clinton and Carter, Martin Luther King, Jr., Oprah Winfrey, Angelina Jolie & Brad Pitt, Bono, George Clooney & his Dad, Aaron Feuerstein, Ted Turner, the young Pakistani School Girl, *Malala* and a long list of *movie stars* and people in *show business*. They give of their time, talents and wealth, sharing it with those in need; trying to reduce the gap between the Haves and the Have-Nots. If there were more people like these special people, in other parts of the world, most of our global problems would be considerably diminished. Globalization gives us the opportunity to stand out as *shining stars*, as one attempts to compare American generosity with that of people from the rest of the world.

Look around and it will be impossible to find another country in the world that is considered to be the example for emulation. Many people want to visit our Country. They plan and collect cash over the years, only for a trip to the United States of America. Working for well over a decade in an American Pharmaceutical Company in India, I know personally that many of my colleagues who made the trip, returned with glowing reports of the many beautiful scenes, wonderful sights and above all, the excellent American people. It is not just our size, our financial or geographic situation, our natural and agricultural resources that are the envy of many; it is the American people who are admired and appreciated by most individuals. There are, exceptions to this rule; but those are often prompted by feelings initiated by the Green Monster.

Josef Joffe of the German Weekly, *Insight*, has described this situation at length in his popular publication, "The Myth of American Decline". The large number of people admitted to the United States of America as immigrants on a regular basis, far outnumbers the next country in the study. If we were not the Country of Choice, why would so many people from different cultures and countries decide to adopt American Citizenship? The answer is obvious! Contrary to current conventional concepts, we are **not** sliding down a slippery slope. We are soon to be **#1** again. Thank the Good Lord! God Bless America. *Ad Multos Annos*.



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