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A QUANTUM LEAP IN TECHNOLOGY-THE FUTURE SCENARIO OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to understand the uncertain challenges that the digital revolution presents before us in the coming years. The evolutionary supremacy of the species of the Homo Sapiens is put to the greatest test at this stage. Artificial Intelligence and Robotics are shaping and redefining the contemporary history of humanity. The paper intends to study the impact of the quantum leap in digital revolution on the future of education and employment.

Keywords: Digital revolution, contemporary history, education, employment, artificial intelligence, robotics.

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A QUANTUM LEAP IN TECHNOLOGY-THE FUTURE SCENARIO OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

- **Dr. Anupama Sabhapathy**

The age has set in where centuries of established systems and patterns of human existence are witnessing a subtle and a massive revolution in lightning speed. The Industrial revolution created a new era of science and technology that gave rise to a momentous rise of factory systems, automobiles, scientific inventions, aviation, etc that completely transformed the face of human history. With this followed the rise of nationalist consciousness that embarked a period that glorified the spirit of nationalism. Former structures of monarchy and the omnipotence of the church collapsed in the rising tide of nationalism. The world was adapting itself to the unprecedented change, trying to experiment the various dimensions of power-politics. Nations were formed on different ideological foundations that became the major contention for wars. The feelings of nationalism ran through the veins of the whole world, grouping nations with similar ideologies and declaring hate on the others. The high current of fighting for boundaries was equally well supported by the advancement in the field of science and technology. Science dispelled the monopoly of the church that had swayed the western world and kept it under rigorous questioning and observation. The new heroes who emerged out of the nationalist wars assumed supreme power that eventually ended in dictatorial ventures.

The 20th century was marked with strife and bloodshed. It reached a new peak during World War II with the intervention of nuclear bombs and scientific war-machinery. The catastrophe of the war signalled an emergency for a more humane approach towards life. The efforts of devastating nations were channelised for saner purposes of social relevance. It had finally brought in the prevalence of the two dominant ideologies of Liberalism and Communism between the two super powers of the post-world war. Nations were divided on the principles of ideologies. Democracy survived as a middle ground between the two. The post-modern times ushered in major changes in the economic and

social conditions of the peoples across the world, trying to settle on the ravages caused by the wars. Militant regimes and strengthening the nuclear machinery became the fresh cause of concern among the world leaders, each nation vying with the other in the production and accumulation of nuclear missiles.

The 1990s saw a new global phenomenon with the rise of information and computer technology defining and setting new trends in the realm of information and broadcasting media. The formulation and implementation of the policies of LPG, that is, Liberalisation, Privatisation, Globalisation altered the trajectory of the world. The outburst of information and the introduction of the internet gave access to a whole new world. Liberalisation brought in the realities of consumerist culture and digital life style. Even the economically vulnerable countries witnessed a free flow of money and the merging of lifestyles and cultures. This cross-cultural phenomenon opened new vistas in education, employment and commercial exchanges. The internet and its various associated applications revolutionised the whole pattern of human existence.

The beginning of the 21st century set the stage for the future turn of events. Citizens across the world groped to understand the new concept that had invaded their lives in the form of digital technology where everything was getting 'smart'. Citizens became netizens with the introduction of the mobile phones and soon followed by smart phones and even advanced ones. We are now placed in a precarious position of having disconnected from the past, conventional mode of existence and embraced a new, unfamiliar world where automated machines dictate our tastes, thoughts and even our decisions.

The digital age has commenced bringing with it an unprecedented array of automatic gadgets and notwithstanding, it has made a gigantic leap from being mere operated machines to self-thinking robots. This is the area of threat or a blessing that is to set the stage for the next 50 years. The luxury and the ease of switching buttons on and off had made life easy. Nevertheless, gadgets acted as mere tools in the hands of the humans. The 21st century has put that behind and heralded the entry of machines and robots that replace humans more precisely and effectively than actual humans.

Yuval Noah Harari, the globally acclaimed historian presents this situation vividly in his book, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*, a book that unfolds the future of education, employment and human existence in general. He begins in this way;

> "In a world deluged by irrelevant information, clarity is power. In theory, anybody can join the debate about the future of humanity, but it is so hard to maintain a clear vision. Frequently, we don't even notice that a debate is going on, or what the key questions are. Billions of us can hardly afford the luxury of investigating, because we have more pressing things to do: Unfortunately, history gives no discounts. If the future of humanity is decided in your absence, because you are too busy feeding and clothing your kids – you and they will not be exempt from the consequences."(21 Lessons for the 21st Century, Introduction)

The above statements speak of gaining clarity when flooded with information from all quarters. This signifies that there are no clues of the developments and consequences of the digital era. However, the age has commenced and it expects that citizens all over the world get tuned and equipped to the process of digital transformation. We are at that point in history where the Darwinian reality of 'survival of the fittest' has become more relevant than before. The tremendous overhaul from simple tools and machinery that were invented to support and assist humans has grown in quantum leaps signalling the dominance of machines over humans.

Education that insisted and focussed on all the great historical and scientific achievements seem to have no place henceforth. A period of irrelevance has creeped in. Youths are put in a precarious position of irrelevance where the conventional skills and jobs have no place in a world of gadgets that behave and have the power of humans. The skills that had been traditionally handed over and been acclaimed as eternal and universal are now on the threshold of invalidity and outdatedness. What then is the scenario for all and particularly for Generation X who have severed their historical ties and have no connect with the scheme of things that technology brings to their tables. Drawing sense from the present, it has to be accepted that Technology will take over every aspect of

human life by 2050 or even earlier. Artificial Intelligence has, in fact emphasized the theme of irrelevance of all that were in currency till now.

To further quote the concern and caution of Harari about the new and unfamiliar era that is slowly to take over the world,

> "We have no idea what the job market will look like in 2050. It is generally agreed that machine learning and robotics will change almost every line of work – from producing yoghurt to teaching yoga. However, there are conflicting views about the nature of the change and its imminence." (*Ibid,* Chapter 2, *When You Grow Up You Might Not Have a Job)*

AI is expected to perform or even outperform the humans in thinking, analysing and decision-taking. The only area humans still retain a ray of hope is the possession and expression of human emotions. It is believed that with this massive invasion of AI in every sphere of life, the irrelevance of humans stands out precariously more so when the educated youths are thrown out of employable skills and expose themselves as "useless". Will there be a whole generation who will not know the immensity of the uselessness where their abilities and intelligence have superseded by algorithms and programming. AI has presented its power of deciding and dictating our tastes, emotions, what we eat, wear, who we marry etc. This massive technological revolution is symbolic of a great upheaval in our religion, politics, beliefs, education and every sphere of life. It is all about big data and a keen observation of human behaviour by data. Scientists and thinkers admit that they have no idea how the world transforms by 2050. The prevalent dominant themes of religion, politics, economics, and other spheres may not hold any grain in a technologically-ruled world.

Principles of truth and morality will manifest themselves in a way much different from now. Media and information systems may not have their sway in the coming years. Philosophy will acquire a new meaning perhaps. Human evolution has witnessed centuries of evolution and marked changes in its historical spectrum. However, the imminent change in which we are all participants marks a significant time in human history where the

predominance of human thought and intelligence is in all probability to be superseded by thinking machines. The cognitive and behavioural abilities of the people of the digital age may require a quantum leap of adaptability and survival abilities to ensure that they do not become 'useless' and irrelevant'

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