

Conversations at the Edge of History -II Podcasts as the Archives of the Future

By Uday Kumar Varma

Author is a former Secretary, Information and Broadcasting, GOI

The rise of the long-form podcast may ultimately prove to be more than a cultural or technological phenomenon. It may represent a profound transformation in the way human civilisation records itself. What appears today as an explosion of digital conversation may tomorrow be recognised as one of the greatest accumulations of living historical material ever created.

Every age leaves behind its documentary residue. Historians of ancient civilisations depended upon inscriptions, chronicles, and fragments of oral tradition. Later generations inherited letters, diaries, memoirs, parliamentary records, newspapers, manifestoes, and eventually radio and television archives. Through such material, scholars reconstructed not only events but the interior life of societies—their anxieties, ambitions, prejudices, aspirations, and intellectual struggles.

The twenty-first century, however, is generating something unprecedented: continuous, unscripted, globally accessible conversations among the principal actors shaping history while history itself unfolds in real time.

This distinction is crucial. Earlier archives were often delayed, selective, and mediated heavily by institutions. Political leaders wrote memoirs years after events had occurred. Scientists communicated through formal papers stripped of speculation and emotional candour. Newspapers compressed thought into narrow columns and shrinking attention spans. Television privileged performance over reflection. Much of the intellectual atmosphere surrounding great historical transformations therefore disappeared irretrievably.

The long-form podcast changes this equation dramatically.

For the first time, entrepreneurs, scientists, economists, philosophers, technologists, military strategists, artists, and political actors are thinking aloud in public for hours at a stretch. They speculate, contradict themselves, revise assumptions, reveal uncertainty, articulate ambition, and expose the intellectual tensions of their age with a spontaneity earlier archival forms rarely captured. Future historians studying the emergence of artificial intelligence, biotechnology, climate transitions, geopolitical realignments, or the social consequences of digital capitalism may therefore possess a richness of source material unimaginable to scholars of earlier centuries.

One may compare this phenomenon, in limited ways, to the celebrated correspondence of Enlightenment thinkers or the diaries of statesmen and scientists. Yet even that comparison understates the scale of what is now occurring.

Those earlier materials were fragmentary and accessible only to small elites. Podcasts, by contrast, constitute a vast, democratised, and continuously expanding archive—audio-visual records preserved across digital platforms and consumed across continents almost instantaneously.

This becomes especially significant in the age of artificial intelligence. Humanity may be standing at the threshold of transformations capable of redefining labour, creativity, warfare, governance, education, and perhaps even cognition itself. Never before have the makers of a potentially civilisation-altering technology spoken so extensively and publicly while their inventions evolve before the eyes of the world. The conversations surrounding AI today may one day acquire the historical value that we now attach to the debates of Enlightenment philosophers, the exchanges of early nuclear physicists, or the correspondence of political revolutionaries.

Yet the rise of podcasts also raises serious questions and challenges.

The first concerns preservation. Digital abundance can paradoxically produce digital fragility. Vast quantities of contemporary conversation remain dependent upon private platforms, unstable business models, changing technologies, and uncertain archival standards. Entire repositories of intellectual history may disappear through corporate collapse, technological obsolescence, deletion, or neglect. Future historians may therefore inherit not merely an abundance of information but also catastrophic gaps within it.

A second challenge concerns authenticity. Podcasts often create an illusion of intimacy and spontaneity, yet many participants remain conscious of performance, reputation, audience cultivation, and ideological signalling. The spoken word, no less than the written memoir, may conceal as much as it reveals. Historians of the future will therefore need to approach podcasts critically—as artefacts shaped by algorithms, incentives, audience expectations, and the performative instincts of the digital age.

There is also the problem of excess. Earlier historians struggled because records were scarce. Future scholars may confront the opposite difficulty: overwhelming informational abundance. Millions of hours of conversation are now uploaded each year. The challenge may no longer be discovering material but filtering, organising, authenticating, and interpreting it meaningfully. Artificial intelligence itself may eventually become indispensable in navigating the enormous archives generated by the digital era.

Yet despite these limitations, something undeniably historic is occurring. The modern podcast has revived, in technological form, one of humanity's oldest intellectual traditions: the extended conversation. Beneath the machinery of algorithms and platforms lies something profoundly ancient—the human desire to think collectively through dialogue. Socrates taught through conversation. The salons of Europe flourished through conversation. Scientific and philosophical revolutions often emerged from circles of sustained argument and speculation. Podcasts, at their best, continue that lineage in a global electronic amphitheatre.

This is why certain contemporary podcasters assume a significance extending beyond journalism or entertainment. Figures such as Dwarkesh Patel are becoming inadvertent archivists of civilisational transition. Through long and probing discussions with scientists, technologists, economists, and philosophers, they are preserving not merely information but the intellectual atmosphere of an age confronting unprecedented change.

Future historians may therefore study our podcasts not simply to know what happened, but to understand how humanity felt, feared, imagined, and reasoned while standing at the edge of a new epoch.

Public-Private Partnership Strategy in AML-CFT Aids National Security Mechanism

By Vipul Tamhane

Author is an anti-money Laundering and combating terrorist financing specialist and provides legal and commercial advice to businesses, governments, and law enforcement organisations

AML/CFT failure is not due to lack of laws, but due to weak implementation ecosystems built on unfair pressure, fragmentation, and a culture that rewards self-protection over genuine detection.

I. The Structural Flaw at the Heart of AML-CFT

Financial crime does not flourish because states lack laws. It flourishes because the architecture built to enforce those laws is structurally misaligned. The dominant global Anti-Money Laundering and Combating Financing of Terrorism (AML-CFT) model places the Money Laundering Reporting Officer (MLRO), the single most consequential actor in financial crime detection, in an impossible position: employed by a bank, responsible to a regulator, accountable to neither without fear of retribution. This structural contradiction, produces what is termed as "self-protecting" behaviour, where MLROs do just enough to avoid punishment, rather than genuinely prevent crime. The result is a compliance ecosystem that generates paperwork but not prevention.

The policy consequences are significant. Suspicious Activity Report (SAR) volumes rise annually across jurisdictions while prosecution rates stagnate. Watch-list screening consumes enormous institutional resources because US, EU, and UN sanctions lists produce overlapping, inconsistent lists that create more confusion than useful information. Risk-based approaches, the foundational pillar of FATF guidance, are reduced to tick-box exercises because MLROs fear regulatory retribution for exercising discretion differently than an examiner might have in hindsight. The system, in short, is optimised for the appearance of compliance rather than the substance of detection.

II. The Case for a Tripartite PPP Architecture

What could be proposed for operational cognizance, and what this article argues deserves urgent adoption, is a fundamental restructuring of the AML-CFT model from a bilateral, adversarial relationship into a tripartite public-private partnership (PPP). The current dynamic pits regulators against banks, with MLROs trapped in the crossfire. The proposed Middle-Course Approach redefines the MLRO as an independent, fairly treated third pillar, neither a bank instrument nor a regulatory enforcer, but a trusted co-constructor of the intelligence framework itself.

Feature	Adversarial Model (Current)	PPP Middle-Course Approach
Structure	Bilateral: Regulator vs. Bank	Tripartite: Regulator - MLRO - Bank
MLRO Role	Conflicted bank employee / regulator agent	Independent co-constructor of AML framework
Pressure Type	Unfair, fear-driven, shifting	Fair, proportionate, predictable
MLRO Goal	Self-protection (discharging)	Genuine compliance and prevention
Outcome	Weak or tough regulation (ineffective)	Effective and efficient AML/CFT

This tripartite architecture is not merely an organisational reform, it is a national security imperative. Terrorism financing is the mirror image of money laundering: clean money directed toward criminal ends. An MLRO operating under fair pressure, with genuine independence and board-level institutional backing, becomes the state's most valuable early-warning asset embedded inside the private financial system. An MLRO operating under unfair pressure becomes a liability, filing SARs to protect themselves rather than to detect threats.

III. How the PPP Model Strengthens National Security

The national security dividend of this PPP model operates through four distinct mechanisms. First, intelligence quality replaces intelligence volume. When MLROs are freed from the perverse incentive to over-report for self-protection, SAR filings become genuinely actionable. Financial Intelligence Units, already under-resourced, can focus analytical effort on real threats rather than filtering through defensive noise.

Second, bidirectional intelligence flows replace one-way reporting. The current consent regime, where MLROs must seek authority before completing a suspicious transaction without being able to disclose why, is operationally unworkable and creates dangerous limbo periods. A reformed PPP model establishes feedback loops: FIUs inform institutions about outcomes, typologies are jointly developed, and red-flag intelligence moves in both directions across the public-private boundary.

Third, MLRO independence prevents regulatory capture. As academic addition in the subject by Ayres and Braithwaite demands responsive regulation theory, it warns, cooperative compliance models risk capture, where private actors co-opt public enforcers. An institutionally independent MLRO, insulated from both bank profit motives and regulator performance pressures, serves as a structural check against this risk, protecting the integrity of the intelligence ecosystem.

Fourth, and most critically, financial institutions become active national security nodes. Banks sitting at the intersection of domestic and cross-border financial flows possess more raw intelligence about financial crime networks than most state agencies. Mobilising that intelligence, through trusted PPP structures, real-time data sharing platforms, and joint investigative task forces, transforms AML-CFT from a compliance function into a distributed financial intelligence grid serving national security objectives.

IV. The Reform Agenda: What States and Institutions Must Do

Translating this model into practice demands parallel action on two fronts. For regulators, the priority is ending the regime of shifting expectations, reforming the consent process, rationalising watch-list infrastructure, and, most importantly, treating MLROs as partners rather than proxies. Proportionality in enforcement, feedback on SAR outcomes, and regulator competence in domain-specific banking environments are not optional refinements. They are preconditions for a functional PPP.

For financial institutions, the reform agenda centres on organisational culture. The level of institutional dedication to national security operations becomes evident through three structural decisions which include elevating anti-money laundering responsibilities to board members and establishing compliance procedures as part of enterprise risk management and providing sufficient resources for money laundering reporting officer duties. The executive leadership of an organization establishes whether the money laundering reporting officer functions with full authority or faces threats to their role.

V. Conclusion: Reframing AML-CFT as a Sovereignty Function

A deeper enterprise analysis reveal that is most overlooked in policy discourse: the MLRO is not a compliance officer. The MLRO is a national security asset, one whose effectiveness is entirely dependent on how fairly the system treats them. A pressured, self-protecting MLRO is a vulnerability in the national security architecture. An empowered, independent, fairly-treated MLRO is its most potent instrument.

States that continue to treat AML-CFT as a regulatory obligation rather than a co-produced intelligence function will continue to generate rising SAR volumes and falling prosecution rates. The public-private partnership model Bello's framework implies offers a more honest and more effective alternative: one where the financial system is not merely regulated, but actively mobilised in defence of national security. The reform is not expensive. It requires political will, structural honesty, and the recognition that protecting the MLRO from unfair pressure is, ultimately, how states protect themselves.

Thucydides Trap and Uncle Sam's Hug with the Chinese Dragon

By - Dr. Santhosh Mathew

The author is a Professor, Centre for South Asian Studies, School of International Studies & Social Sciences, Pondicherry Central University.

"When a rising power threatens to displace a ruling power, the most dangerous outcome is war." This is the essence of the famous "Thucydides Trap" theory explained by Harvard scholar Graham Allison from the writings of ancient Greek historian Thucydides. The concept dominated global discussions during the Xi-Trump summit in Beijing, where the leaders of the world's two most powerful nations attempted to balance rivalry with cooperation.

When Chinese President Xi Jinping welcomed Donald Trump in Beijing, the world witnessed more than a diplomatic meeting. It was a carefully staged geopolitical performance between a rising superpower and an established global hegemon. Xi's repeated references to the Thucydides Trap carried a deeper warning: history shows that conflicts often erupt when an emerging power challenges an existing dominant power. Athens challenged Sparta in ancient Greece; today China challenges the United States.

The summit reflected both tension and necessity. Washington and Beijing compete in trade, artificial intelligence, semiconductors, Taiwan, the South China Sea and military influence in the Indo-Pacific. At the same time, both economies remain deeply interconnected. Neither side can afford a complete breakdown in relations.

International politics has never operated on permanent friendship or permanent hostility. Nations pursue permanent interests. The old diplomatic principle that "there are no permanent friends or enemies, only permanent interests" was visible throughout the Beijing summit. The same America that once fought communist China during the Korean War later became the architect of China's return to global diplomacy.

The roots of this relationship go back to the dramatic diplomatic transformations of the 1970s. During the Cold War, the United States realised that isolating China would only strengthen the Soviet Union. Washington therefore began searching for diplomatic openings with Beijing.

The breakthrough started with the famous "Ping-Pong Diplomacy." Table tennis unexpectedly became an instrument of foreign policy when American and Chinese players exchanged visits in 1971. Sports succeeded where formal diplomacy had failed for decades. This soft diplomatic opening was followed by one of history's greatest examples of shuttle diplomacy.

American strategist Henry Kissinger secretly travelled to Beijing in 1971 to prepare the ground for President Richard Nixon to meet Mao Zedong in 1972. The Nixon-Mao handshake changed the global balance of power. Communist China and capitalist America moved towards détente despite their ideological hostility because both viewed the Soviet Union as a larger strategic threat.

America also supported China's entry into the United Nations Security Council as a permanent member in 1971, replacing Taiwan. That single decision transformed international politics. China gradually entered global markets, attracted Western investment, expanded manufacturing capacity and emerged as the world's factory.

The irony of history is striking. Uncle Sam helped open the gates for China's economic rise. Today the same United States fears the growing power of the Chinese dragon it once encouraged. American companies shifted industries to China, transferred technology and built supply chains that strengthened Beijing's economy. China used globalisation not merely for economic growth but for strategic transformation.

The Xi-Trump summit therefore carried contradictions. Both sides exchanged smiles while remaining strategic competitors. Trump approached China as a negotiator seeking trade advantages and geopolitical leverage. Xi projected China as a stable civilisational power advocating coexistence rather than confrontation.

The COVID-19 period worsened mistrust between the two powers. The Wuhan conspiracy theory became a major source of diplomatic tension. Many American politicians accused China of hiding information regarding the origins of the virus. Beijing rejected these allegations and accused the West of politicising the pandemic. Anti-China rhetoric sharply increased in Washington during those years, leading many analysts to predict a new Cold War.

But opinion in geopolitics is not an iron rod. Strategic calculations change with circumstances. Economic realities often force adversaries back to the negotiating table. America still depends on Chinese manufacturing and financial networks, while China requires access to Western technology, markets and global financial systems.

That is why dialogue continues despite tensions. The Beijing summit reopened diplomatic channels at a time when mistrust was rising dangerously. Both nations understand that military conflict between nuclear powers would devastate the global economy and destabilise the international system.

The larger question remains unanswered: can the United States and China escape the Thucydides Trap? History offers many examples where rising and ruling powers entered war. But history also offers rare moments when diplomacy prevented catastrophe. Ping-Pong Diplomacy once softened Cold War hostility. Shuttle diplomacy under Kissinger and Nixon changed the global order. The Xi-Trump summit may become another chapter in that long diplomatic journey.

The image of Uncle Sam hugging the Chinese dragon in Beijing symbolised the strange reality of modern geopolitics. Cooperation and competition now exist together. Behind every handshake lies strategic calculation. The future of the twenty-first century may depend on whether Washington and Beijing choose coexistence over confrontation.

Opposition is Shortsighted on Delimitation. Don't Reduce it to North-South Divide

By – Dr. Seshadri Chari

The writer is the former editor of 'Organiser'. He is General Secretary of FINS.

Delimitation Committee is the need of the hour. Shouting it down as a conspiracy of the BJP government is not sane, responsible governance.

On the 135th birth anniversary of BR Ambedkar, Chairman of the Constituent Assembly's crucial Drafting Committee, the government announced its proposed legislation to the Constitution. The three Bills seek to create a 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assemblies of states and Union Territories (UTs).

The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 proposes to expand the strength of the Lok Sabha from 550 to 850 members (815 from states and 35 from Union Territories). This is to be done by amending Article 81 to allow for the increase and Article 82 to decouple delimitation from the mandatory "latest census" requirement, potentially allowing the use of 2011 Census data.

The Delimitation Bill, 2026 provides for the establishment of a new Delimitation Commission to readjust constituency boundaries and seat allocations. This will be the first major redrawing of boundaries proposed since 2002.

The Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026 seeks to apply similar electoral reforms and seat expansions to Union Territories, including Delhi, Puducherry, and Jammu & Kashmir.

The three Bills were reportedly made available on the MPs' portal 48 hours before the Parliament's upcoming session, which began Thursday.

Delimitation is course correction

From the time of freeze on Parliamentary representation based on the 1971 Census to the post-2011 Census, Indian states and Union Territories have seen a demographic metamorphosis. For over five decades since 1971, Parliament has remained under-represented in relation to the increase in population and demographic changes.

Many metropolitan cities have outgrown their original size and have added several satellite cities and townships. Massive urbanisation and migration have resulted in some constituencies—such as Malkajgiri in Telangana, Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh, and Bangalore North in Karnataka—having more than 20 lakh voters, making representation a mere formality. Issues such as constituency development, managing financial packages, and central schemes have become mere statistics with no effect on the ground. Delimitation of these constituencies should be seen more as creating a better administrative process than seat arithmetic.

The arithmetic of representation in democracy is based on people and not geography. The argument that the freeze of 1971 has protected the interests of states that managed population growth by reducing the birth rate is understandable. Distribution of seats based solely on the number of voters would amount to penalising some of the southern states for doing good work in social indices. At the same time, denying the people of some northern states their right to be represented adequately is a democratic compromise. The delimitation process will have to address these issues of democratic rights, population density, geography-voter imbalance, and the federal structure of constitutional governance.

The structural imbalance in the present system of representation must be clinically examined, understood with an open mind, and corrected. Delimitation is the only constitutionally available process to carry out this correction. This is precisely the reason why a new Delimitation Committee is the need of the hour. Shouting it down as a conspiracy of the BJP government, reducing it to a "North-South divide", and burning copies of the Bill in public are good political gimmicks, but not sane, responsible governance. Avoiding healthy debate, politicising the issue, and staging a walkout in Parliament will not resolve the problem. All political parties have a responsibility toward the people of India to reconcile the anomalies of population-based representation and federal equity.

Short-sighted Opposition

The task before the proposed Delimitation Committee is enormous, with far-reaching consequences for the nation's economic and political federalism as well as democratic trajectory. While the government needs to avoid a quick-fix band-aid solution,

the Opposition should work with the government to determine the framework of the new formula and its effective implementation. For a country of India's size and complexity, representation cannot be a mere technicality—it must be the lifeline.

Opposition to the three proposed Bills is growing from expected quarters. Congress, having lost a series of elections since 2014, is probably looking at every move of the Narendra Modi government with the intent of stymying its electoral fortunes. To assume malice in every legislative exercise of the government, especially regarding reservations for women in the legislative arena—which the Congress claims to have championed for decades—is short-sighted, to say the least. Increasing the number of seats, thus increasing representation, could also facilitate better micro governance if the legislative responsibilities are listed clearly in the Bill.

The three Bills seek to update a genuine democratic process that was delayed and denied to the people for decades. It is important for the government to allow wider debate inside and outside Parliament, and to avoid the temptation to pass the Bills without wider conversation. But it is equally important for the Opposition to behave responsibly and improve the content of the Bills rather than question the government's intent.

[Read complete article on website theprint.in](https://www.theprint.in)

Iran War: What Led to the Present Impasse?

By - Vappala Balachandran

The author is a former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat GOI

On May 10 Robert Kagan, co-founder of the neoconservative “Project for the New American Century” wrote in “The Atlantic” that US cannot reverse the consequences of its defeat in Iran, “nor can it control those consequences either”. He added: “Iran has emerged from this conflict as the key player in the Persian Gulf region and, by extension, as one of the key players in global energy geopolitics”.

Similarly, The New York Times (NYT) said on the 12th, quoting US intelligence agencies, that Iran has restored operational access to 30 of the 33 missile sites it has along the Strait of Hormuz and that Iran still fields 70% of its mobile launchers across the country, thus retaining 70% of its prewar missile stockpile. NYT also added that Iran has regained access to 90% of its underground missile storage and launch facilities nationwide, which are now assessed to be “partially or fully operational”.

These observations were reproduced by the Jerusalem Center for Security & Foreign Affairs in their “Daily Alert” on May 14. “Daily Alert” is read by global policy makers who support Israel's policies.

The present impasse in the US-Israel campaign against Iran has led to serious discussions to find reasons why the Trump White House could be so wrong in their initial assessment that the Khamenei regime would collapse immediately after the US-Israel “decapitation” strikes on 28 February 2026, when “Operation Epic Fury” started. They quoted a by-line in Times of Israel on 28 February 2026 itself which cited CIA's assessment that assassination of Khamenei “won't necessarily topple the Islamic Republic”.

They wonder how both countries with strong intelligence network could fail to fathom Iran's inner strength and resilience to withstand such savage bombing and instead inflict substantial damage to US defence network in the region.

This has led to a conclusion that such grave assessment mistakes on the collapse of Iran could have been avoided, had the well-established US National Security Council (NSC) procedure been followed.

What is the NSC Procedure? Since 1947, when the National Security Council was set up under the National Security Act of 1947, the responsibility of integrating intelligence from 18 intelligence agencies, backed by institutional memory, was the responsibility of USNSC through their three tier committees before final decision is taken by the Cabinet level members, chaired by the president.

On March 24 Gregory F. Treverton, former Chairman of the National Intelligence Council (NIC) said that the Trump White House had reduced the strength of NSC by half in May 2025 as a “reform” and to “streamline and restructure national intelligence under Secretary of State Marco Rubio”.

Treverton says that in that process, important members like the “Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman and director of national intelligence, both a regular presence in debates in previous administrations, were made situational rather than regular members. They would attend as needed, not automatically”.

If this is correct, the present Secretary of State has been given an unusually higher representation in the Trump NSC whereas he was only one of the participants earlier. Treverton quotes Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard’s testimony on March 18, 2026, to the Senate Intelligence Committee and says: “Neither Gabbard nor other members of the intelligence community were part of Trump’s decision-making about going to war”.

My own research into the declassified NSC documents during the Bill Clinton era (1993-2001) and later reveals that the NSC process had advised the president that excessive sanctions on Iran without diplomatic dialogue would be “very dangerous” and “pose risks for the entire region”.

The NSC conclusion was: “Sanctions were always intended to serve as a complement to engagement and make diplomacy more effective—not replace dialogue altogether”. The same policy was followed by President Barack Obama and Joe Biden.

Treverton concludes: “Conducting a war requires a hard-headed process for assessing progress and evaluating next steps. In other administrations, the National Security Council would have provided that”.

Article first published in Lokmat Times Nagpur Main on May 17, 2026

The Basic Laws of Human Stupidity

By Sardar Sanjay Matkar

The author is a geopolitical analyst and former defence contractor with the US and intelligence professional with over four decades of operational and strategic experience across conflict zones and policy corridors worldwide.

In 1976, Professor Cipolla published a 60-page essay describing the fundamental laws of a force he perceived as the greatest existential threat to humanity: stupidity.

He divides humanity into four main categories: Intelligent, Bandit, Helpless, Stupid. All are defined on the basis of a win/lose concept, slightly echoing the prisoner’s dilemma*. The question is: what category are you in?

*The prisoner’s dilemma is a foundational game theory thought experiment showing why two rational individuals might not cooperate, even when it appears in their best interest to do so. It demonstrates a conflict between individual rationality and collective well-being, where self-interest leads to a worse outcome for both parties.

Law 1: Everyone always and inevitably underestimates the number of stupid people in circulation.

No matter how many idiots you suspect surrounded us, we are invariably underestimating the total. This problem is compounded by the biased assumption that some people are intelligent because of superficial factors such as their job, education, or other characteristics that we believe rule out their stupidity.

For example, a successful person may be excluded because that person is a multimillionaire.

And yet... This brings us to the 2nd law:

Law 2: The probability that a person is stupid is independent of any other characteristic of that person.

Cipolla postulates that stupidity is a variable that remains constant in all populations. Every category you can imagine – gender, ethnicity, nationality, education, income – has a fixed percentage of stupid people. University professors can be stupid. There are global leaders in politics and business who have been and/or are stupid.

Law 3: A stupid person is a person who causes losses to another person or group of people when he or she does not benefit and may even suffer losses.

Cipolla calls it the golden law of stupidity. A stupid person, according to him, is a person who causes problems for others without any clear benefit for himself. Thousands of people who cannot help but post fake articles on social media. It is the basic kind of stupidity. The customer service person who keeps you on the phone for a long, hangs up on you at least once and manages to complicate your issue. That's stupidity squared.

This law also introduces three other phenotypes that, according to Cipolla, coexist with stupidity.

First, there is the intelligent person, whose actions benefit both himself and others. Then comes the bandit, who gets rich at the expense of others. And finally, the abused, the defenceless person, whose actions enrich others at his own expense.

Non-stupid people are an imperfect and inconsistent group. Sometimes we act intelligently, sometimes we are abused, or selfish villains... And sometimes we are a bit of both.

The stupid, in comparison, are models of consistency, acting at all times with unwavering idiocy.

Being constantly stupid is the only thing constant about stupidity. That's what makes stupid people so dangerous.

As Cipolla explains further:

Essentially stupid people are dangerous and harmful because reasonable people find it difficult to imagine and understand unreasonable behaviour.

An intelligent person can understand the logic of bandits. The actions of the bandits follow a pattern of rationality: a wicked rationality, but always rational. The bandits want an advantage for themselves. Since they are not smart enough to find ways to get the advantage as well as provide the victim with some kind of advantage, they will produce their advantage by taking away the victim's advantage. It's bad and illegal, but it's rational and if you're rational, you can predict it. You can predict the actions of bandits and their criminal manoeuvres and therefore you can build your defences.

With a stupid person all this is absolutely impossible, as the third fundamental law explains.

The stupid person will harass you without any reason, without any advantage, without any plan, at the most improbable times and places.

You have no rational way of telling if, when, where, how and why he or she will attack you. Facing any stupid individual, you are completely at their mercy.

This analysis leads to law number 4:

Law 4: Non-stupid people always underestimate the destructive power of stupid individuals.

Non-stupid people constantly always forget that and, in all places, and under all circumstances, dealing and/or associating with stupid people is always a costly mistake. When we underestimate idiots, we do so at our risk. This brings us to the fifth and final law:

Law 5: A stupid person is the most dangerous type of person.

We can't do anything for idiots. The difference between societies that collapse under the weight of their stupid citizens and those that transcend is the composition of the non-stupid people. Those societies that progress despite their stupidity have a high proportion of people who act intelligently and counterbalance the losses of the stupid by bringing gains for themselves and their fellows.

Declining societies have the same percentage of stupid people as prosperous societies. But they also have a high percentage of defenceless people and, an alarming proliferation of bandits with accents of stupidity.

There is no defence against stupidity. The only way for a society to avoid being crushed by the burden of its idiots is for the non-stupid to work even harder to compensate for the losses of the stupid. When you draw the parallel with the environment, and most intelligent and smart-working people trying to make up for other people's stupidity, Cipolla was not far from the truth.

Now, extrapolate this with politics. Whether in your neighbourhood, or at national level or even international level, one person's stupidity (a certain world leader who has publicly declared himself as a King, then as Jesus and then as a favourite of Jesus) or the stupidity of a group of people (This leader's cabinet members supported by most of his country's elected members) bring misery and extreme hardship to most of the world's population. And when this person does everything that adheres to the 3rd Golden Law of Stupidity, the question to ask is – who gains? Is he actually stupid or a bandit that showcases himself as stupid. And, is this bandit controlled by a more shrewd and cunning bandit?

AI-Ecosystem—

By - Dr. Shivshankar Mishra

The author is a former Principal of SBES College of Arts and Commerce, Chh. Sambhajinagar and Professor Emeritus- IHM-A Chh. Sambhajinagar

The GenZ or Zoomers and the AlphaGen are frustrated and restless with the volatile job conditions. Those with specialized and highly regulated fields of study find jobs but anticipate redundancy risk in the fast-emerging AI environment. Educationists realize this and try to align their curricular designs with the AI and Large Language Models (LLM). Freshers quickly grasp and acquire the new digital protocols, but those in jobs find it little challenging to refresh and retrain. At present, people find it confounding to respond with matching agility. Human reflexes seem wanting in speed that the AI advances possess. AI ecosystem is smarter in matters of generating and collating huge mass of information upon which the human talent is supposed to work on. The subtle competition between the two seems unbending and strenuous. It is more pronounced on the sensitivities of the younger generations of GenZ and the AlphaGen. They are showing a tendency to withdraw into isolation and this tendency combined with digital gluing; lands them in prolonged sense of loneliness, anxiety and communication breakdowns. They are restless and clueless as to what their future would be. They seem scared so much that they are scared to set up their families!

Those in mid-tier of their careers are looking for a coping mechanism so as to strike a proper work-life balance and select appropriate re-learning platforms. They realize that the AI is altering job profiles and the education they received is grossly insufficient to match up with the volatile job conditions.

The experience for those with non-technical educational back-grounds like economics, arts, management, humanities or the social sciences, is that of a horror flick, creating discomfiture and an inferiority complex. Lower down the ladder, at the bottom of the work-pyramid stand a high multitude of youth with rudimentary education and un-chiseled job skills. They are a grossly disadvantaged lot who seek the job but feel shy to stand in the queue. They are exposed to mobile apps and some shades of AI literacy, but have no access to proper counseling and training that could help in handling their anxiety and the technology imperatives.

India with highly favourable demographic advantage, somehow, is not preparing a road-map to leverage this advantage. The reason is AI is growing but the global business environment is not conducive for the governance system, to gear up the productive system including the agri-sector to harness it. Uncertainties of job market is creating a subsistence crisis and filling minds with mistrust and fear.

They are becoming the major career risks and the major cause of aggression in individual behavior, leading to suspicion about everything. Family and social violence is growing because of this. The high incidence of rape cases, murders and suicides can also be attributed to such changes in behavior.

It would be wrong to assume that the AI is redundanizing and replacing jobs faster than graduates can retrain themselves for the new environment. AI is leveling the technical playing field due to which the talent priorities place high premium on transferable and soft skills like adaptability, engaging, safety mindfulness, problem-solving and strategic thinking. It's an opportunity for policy frame of India to engage the massive force of the job- seeking youth around the tripod of essential components of managing emotions, up-scaling appropriate skills to stay on task and be faster in responses. The employer is not wrong in demanding the matching job skills in sync with the AI environment. Job market is moving away from traditional, static degrees to seek AI-embedded coping skills with a positive mindset to engage in continuous learning and AI fluency.

It is necessary to understand that the AI philosophy amply indicates that it cannot work in isolation; it needs a human ally with real-time competence. That's the embedded promise by the AI-architecture. It allows people to instantly access vast volumes of information for automating entry-level tasks, leading to practical application for demonstrable outcomes. It is indeed a challenge but essential for the curious minds to future-proof their career plans. Habits are not born, they are cultivated. In the AI environment the habit of continuous learning and developing hands-on experience to spur up work skills with artificial intelligence, has become quintessence of the present-day professionalism.

It is also necessary to understand that AI with all its ancillaries like the LLM (Large Language Models), accelerators and Agentic platforms is designed to be helpful, supportive, and engaging. But it has an inherent frailty that it learns only from the past and countenances the present and the future to offer solutions with a smart affirmative nod. It suffers from a gross limitation that it cannot offer fool-proof judgment in areas like medicine and health care, fundamental sciences, advanced engineering, legal matters and a perplexed human circumstance. It has no understanding of the foundations of human philosophy and social behavior; whereas human minds are formally-informally trained to handle such complex, deep reasoning and critical thinking skills. It is around such pivot that the bonds of coparcenership between human intelligence and the AI architecture can be built up. It is a unique idea of twining the two time travelers: one with the episodic foresight and the other with the holistic vision. Such pairing can be done not only with the technical professionals but also with non-technical, humanities and management professionals. This can be helpful for the bottom-of-the-pyramid workers also. It is about knowing the "why," "what," and "when" of a situation with AI smartness and human emotional intelligence [EI]. The stake-holders can be groomed to continuously engage in acquiring and using online tools, content, and analytics platforms; getting in interactive mode to seek User Experience (UX); mend employee responses towards internal and external communication to leverage the domain expertise for interpreting data and driving organizational and business strategies to achieve coveted goals.

This AI playing field in itself is so vast that every AI application shall need an equal number of human partners as mouthpieces to propagate a reasoned solution. AI in itself is an independent domain to create numerous jobs and investment opportunities. This is the new wave after the "digital vanguard" of school drop outs like Steve Jobs and his cohorts, Steve Wozniak, and Bill Gates, working from garages and back-rooms, transformed computer ideas in 1970's. AI is the second transformational wave. Relentless innovation was the foundation then; relentless innovation to handle AI would be the lever now. The only rider is that the learning partners need to be positive, fearless and responsive to AI alerts. No room for laziness and laid back attitude, or fear. Keeping this in view, the government has already set up the India AI Mission which aims at building a comprehensive ecosystem to foster AI capabilities in the country, in collaboration with the industry. The wish document is ready but does not display any urgency, as yet, to assign responsibilities to attain measurable outcomes. There is urgency for the government to draw up an actionable strategy. The educational policy framework should incorporate the nuances and elements into every training structure in formal and informal way;

inside the class room and at the AI workplace. Proper sensitivity needs to be demonstrated. The youth is India's vanguard to lead the economic and social success. The demographic dividend window of India is expected to last for another 30 years. It is a huge advantage compared to fast ageing populations of major economic powers of the world. The 30-year span needs to be broken into shorter rolling plans to match up with the mercurial speed of the AI technology. Our systems running concurrent with the technology shall yield huge benefits for the country's front running policies. Agile technology needs equally agile coparceners. Dual-dynamism should be in action to sparkle for human well-being.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the FINS or its members.

India is Proud of:

Padma Shri Anke Gowda

He founded India's largest free-access library having more than 20 Lakh books



In a world where recognition often follows wealth, fame, or power, the story of Anke Gowda, a Padma awardee of 2026, stands apart as a quiet yet extraordinary testament to passion, sacrifice, and the transformative power of knowledge. From humble beginnings in rural Karnataka to becoming the founder of one of India's largest free-access libraries.

Gowda was born to parents Mari Gowda and Ningamma, a family of farmers in the small village of Chinakurli in Pandavapura taluk. He began reading and collecting books as a child, beginning with works by Swami Vivekananda when he was still in class IX. He recalls that the people in his village were not accustomed to books, which got him thinking about how to make them more accessible. Gowda went on to earn a bachelor's degree, after which he took several jobs, including one as a bus conductor and another as a security guard.

He completed a master's in Kannada at Maharaja's College, Mysore, where he was influenced by his teacher K. Anantharamu, who memorably told his class, "Never seek bribes, be good to your neighbours and cultivate a good habit." This advice stuck with Gowda, leading him to develop the habit of book collecting seriously. He also began working as a timekeeper at the Pandavapura Cooperative Sugar factory, where he remained for nearly 30 years. He invested a large portion of his salary and retirement savings in collecting books. Gowda lives with his wife and their son in a corner of the Pustaka Mane library.

Over five decades, his vision of importance of reading the books, materialized into Pustaka Mane (House of Books), a massive personal library located in Pandavapura taluk of Mandya district. Today, this library houses over two million books and magazines in more than 20 languages, including rare manuscripts, research journals, dictionaries, and historical texts. It is widely regarded as one of the largest free-access personal libraries in Bharat, and possibly the world.

What makes Anke Gowda's achievement even more remarkable is that he built this vast repository without institutional funding or government support. Every book, every shelf, and every corner of the library is a result of his personal sacrifice. He even sold his own property at one point to purchase more books, underscoring his unwavering commitment to his mission.

Unlike many private collections, Pustaka Mane is not a closed or exclusive space. It is open to everyone—students, researchers, civil service aspirants, and even scholars from across the country. For many, it has become a sanctuary of learning, especially in a rural setting where access to such resources is limited. Gowda himself lives within the library, continuing to manage and expand it despite financial constraints.

In 2026, Government of India recognized his lifelong contribution and conferred him the Padma Shri, under the category of Unsung Heroes. This recognition was not merely for the size of his library, but for the values it represents—selflessness, dedication, and the democratization of knowledge.

Anke Gowda's story is not just about books; it is about vision. At a time when digital distractions dominate, he chose to preserve and promote the culture of reading. His library contains works on diverse subjects, from religion and philosophy to science, literature, and global history, reflecting his belief that knowledge should be inclusive and universal.

However, his journey has not been without challenges. The sheer scale of the collection has created issues of space and preservation. Reports indicate that a significant portion of the books is stored in less-than-ideal conditions due to lack of infrastructure. Yet, even in the face of such difficulties, Gowda continues his work with humility and determination, driven by a single goal: to ensure that knowledge remains accessible to future generations.

Anke Gowda's life offers a powerful lesson in purpose-driven living. He did not seek fame, wealth, or recognition. Instead, he chose a path of quiet service, investing his life in books so that others could learn, grow, and dream. His story reminds us that true impact does not always come from grand gestures; sometimes, it comes from consistent, selfless effort over time. His PUSTAKA MANE is more than a library. It is a symbol of hope, a beacon of learning, and above all, a reminder that the pursuit of knowledge can change the world—one book at a time.

Write to us at:
bulletin@finsindia.org

**OFFICE: 4, Belle View, Lakhamsi Nappu Road,
Dadar (East), MUMBAI – 400014
Phone: 98339 24371**

EDITORIAL BOARD

Col (Dr) Ravindra Tripathi