

Education for the Species

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Respectable scientific opinion holds that the human species is on the verge of untimely extinction. According to Noam Chomsky, the so-called “least advanced” people are the ones taking the lead in trying to protect all of us from extinction. Informed by their ancient knowledge systems, indigenous populations across the world are resisting the plunder of the planet. However, indigenous knowledge systems are in radical conflict not only with global capitalism but with modern education itself, thus raising the issue of radical choice. The issue goes much beyond the classical domain of the pedagogy of the oppressed.

This is an expanded version of the keynote address to the Philosophy of Education Conference at Azim Premji University, Bengaluru in January 2015. I learned much from a very lively discussion by a distinguished audience. I have incorporated some of the points raised during the discussion. The original lecture can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DR9ZepNelA4>.

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Noam Chomsky's grimly titled book *Hegemony or Survival* (2003) opens with some observations of contemporary biologist Ernst Mayr, who is sometimes referred to as “the biological giant of the 20th century” (Foreman 2004: 24). After proposing a very reasonable notion of a species (de Queiroz 2005), Mayr (2001) held that about 50 billion species have appeared on this planet since the origin of life. He estimated that “the average life expectancy of a species is about 1,00,000 years” (Chomsky 2003: 1). Exactly one of these 50 billion species “achieved the kind of intelligence needed to establish a civilisation,” Mayr notes (Chomsky 2003: 1). The civilisation-forming intelligence of this species is the topic for this essay.

From studies on sudden expansion of brain size (Striedter 2004), restructuring of the brain for emergence of language (Crow 2010), and proliferation of tools and other signs of culture, it is now estimated that the modern human species emerged roughly about 1,00,000 years ago (Tattersall 2012). Following Mayr's statistical rule, then, the species is possibly nearing its end.

Sixth ‘Intelligent’ Extinction

We may hope to defy Mayr's doomsday scenario under the impression that the human species, apparently, has remarkable control over its destiny, precisely due to the “kind of intelligence” with which it is endowed. Humans may feel reassured that this kind of intelligence will ultimately devise ways, technological and otherwise, to protect the species beyond its statistical limit. Unfortunately, the hope seems to lack foundations. Mayr's controversial estimate is not the only clue for his doomsday scenario. He proposed another perspective in which the prospect of premature extinction is in fact enhanced by the human kind of intelligence. It is just that the two scenarios

seem to converge on the time left for the species.

Biologists suggest that there are two evolutionary scenarios that lead to the extinction of species. The first form of species extinction is called “background extinction.” This form of extinction happens due to background factors, such as low density of population, limited dispersal ability, inbreeding, successional loss of habitat, climate change, competition, predation, disease, and the like (Soulé 1996). There is considerable dispute about the life of a species undergoing inevitable background extinction. As noted, Mayr thought that species-life is as low as 1,00,000 years. Others calculate it between 1 million and 5–10 million years.

Biologists also list a second form of extinction—“mass extinction”—in which more than 50% of all species on earth, at a given point in time, are wiped out simultaneously due to some massive catastrophe. Biologists identify five events in the last half a billion years when such grand-scale extinction happened. The last of these—the Cretaceous—occurred when, 65 million years ago, dinosaurs and many molluscs became extinct, most probably due to the striking of a giant asteroid.

In either case, species become extinct due to what may be viewed as natural reasons that are external to the species. These occur in nature periodically due to circumstances beyond the control of the members of the species. In these cases of natural extinction on a geological scale, nothing much can be done in the long run, even if a variety of “intelligence” and other favourable factors postpone the inevitable in the short run. At the current stage of knowledge, there is no definite prediction that the human species is about to become extinct due to the convergence of natural background factors or some catastrophic event, such as the striking of a giant comet.

The prediction, rather, is that, after a lapse of 65 million years, the conditions for another—sixth—mass extinction are rapidly maturing. The human species is most likely to disappear due to phenomena

such as nuclear holocaust, massive environmental destruction, global conflict, including biological warfare, astronomical poverty, irreversible damage to food chains, and maybe even just unavailability of potable water. The extinction of the species will most likely be caused by the suicidal behaviour of the species itself. As Chomsky puts it, *we are the asteroid*.

The author of *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (2014), Elizabeth Kolbert suggests in an interview (Drake 2015) that the factor of environmental degradation due to human recklessness alone has enhanced the rate of species extinction by more than 100 times the normal rate in just the last few hundred years. This is because, Kolbert argues, we loaded the extinction rate with widespread hunting,

brought in invasive species. We are now changing the climate, very, very rapidly, by geological standards. We are changing the chemistry of all the oceans. We are changing the surface of the planet. We cut down forests, we plant mono-culture agriculture, which is not good for a lot of species. We're overfishing. The list goes on and on (Drake 2015).

To emphasise, Kolbert's picture only includes extinction of other species triggering mass extinction. To this picture, we need to add factors like nuclear holocaust, global war, dislocation of food chains, massive famines, depletion of potable water, and the like, which more directly relate to the extinction of the human species itself.

Significantly, each of these doomsday scenarios is critically linked to the species' unique endowment of the "kind of intelligence needed to establish a civilisation" (Chomsky 2003: 1). No other species remotely has the ability to change the chemistry of the planet and pollute much of the potable water on earth by its own diligent effort in just a few hundred years, not to mention the ability to construct weapons of mass destruction, to which we will return.

As Mayr pointed out, there is no evidence that nature prefers intelligence over stupidity: beetles and bacteria, for example, are vastly more successful than the great apes, not to mention humans, in terms of survival. Looking at humans through this long lens of evolution, it

could well be, Chomsky holds, that humans were a kind of "biological" error, using their allotted 1,000,000 years to destroy themselves and much else in the process with "cold and calculated savagery" (2003: 2).

The centrality of the notions of intelligence and stupidity brings the topic of the imminent extinction of the species within the broad domain of education. Hence, the title of this article.

Ideology and Hegemony

For his book *Hegemony or Survival, America's Quest for Global Dominance*, suggesting that the prospect of human survival depends primarily on how humanity responds to the hegemony of the United States (us). No doubt, with its absolute military control over the planet and the space around it, and its nuclear hardware capable of vaporising much of the planetary system, the us has represented the peak of the "cold and calculated savagery" with which humans have proceeded to destroy themselves. Moreover, using its military control, the us has thwarted almost every effort to get the planet on some track of recovery. For example, in the last few decades, it has not only ignored the Geneva Convention on warfare and the United Nations (UN) resolutions on terrorism, it has walked out of the Kyoto Protocol on the environment, the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty, and the convention on biological warfare among others. There is some basis, then, for viewing us hegemony as a principal agent for the imminent extinction of the species.

However, the us has not been alone. The ideology that governs us hegemony over the planet had precedents throughout the history of the Western world. As Chomsky (2005: x) notes, the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, rated to be one of the greatest thinkers of the 20th century by many scholars, viewed Nazi Germany as the most "metaphysical of nations." After constructing the spectre of the Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy to take over the world, eminent Western intellectuals thought that "extreme measures" were necessary for "self-defence." "As the Nazi storm clouds settled over

the country in 1935," Chomsky continued, "Martin Heidegger depicted Germany as the 'most endangered' nation in the world, gripped in the 'great pincers' of an onslaught against civilisation itself, led in its crudest form by Russia and America" (Chomsky 2005: x). According to Heidegger, Germany stood "in the center of the Western world," and must protect the great heritage of classical Greece from "annihilation," relying on the "new spiritual energies unfolding historically from out of the center." Hence, the catastrophic war was needed to protect the "great heritage of classical Greece" (Chomsky 2005: x).

When it was attacked by the Japanese in Pearl Harbour, the us unleashed its own "legitimate exercise of self-defense against a vicious enemy" (Chomsky 2005: xi) with a 1,000-plane daylight raid on defenceless Japanese cities, culminating in the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Chomsky notes:

The paroxysm of slaughter and annihilation did not end with the use of weapons that may very well bring the species to a bitter end. We should also not forget that these species-terminating weapons were created by the most brilliant, humane, and highly educated figures of modern civilization, working in isolation, and so entranced by the beauty of the work in which they were engaged that they apparently paid little attention to the consequences (2005: x).

As Chomsky has pointed out, the basic problem is much deeper and historical in character than the immediacy of a current rogue state (Gettys 2014). Thus, even if the current neo-liberal phase represents the "extreme end of the traditional us policy spectrum," these policies have "many precursors, both in us history and among earlier aspirants to global power." "More ominously," Chomsky continued, "their decisions may not be irrational within the framework of prevailing ideology and the institutions that embody it" (2003: 4). This is the crucial point—these are rational decisions taken in a civilisational mode, these are products of the most sophisticated thinking pursued for hundreds of years in great centres of learning. In that sense, there is a direct correlation between the culture of enlightenment and the untimely extinction of the species.

Beyond us hegemony, there is now growing concern that humanity might well be led to a species-terminating global war originating in West Asia. After bitter plunder and strategic warfare conducted by the West for over five decades, this region has now spawned powers, such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), that not only have the armed resources for acquiring local state power, but have the determination to achieve global dominance just like Nazi Germany. In fact, their ideologies go beyond that of Nazism to actually seek the end of the world. Graeme Wood (2015) reports that

we can gather that [ISIS] rejects peace as a matter of principle; that it hungers for genocide; that its religious views make it constitutionally incapable of certain types of change, even if that change might ensure its survival; and that it considers itself a harbinger of—and headline player in—the imminent end of the world.

It is instructive to note in this connection that the prospect of species termination is not restricted to avowedly hegemonic violent states and their ideologies. Thus, Chomsky mentions the apparently benign and peace-loving country, Canada, to understand the real scope of the concerned ideology. Speaking on the energy policies of the Canadian government under former Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Chomsky observed that

It means taking every drop of hydrocarbon out of the ground, whether it's shale gas in New Brunswick or tar sands in Alberta and trying to destroy the environment as fast as possible, with barely a question raised about what the world will look like as a result (Lukacs 2013).

Needless to say, such destruction of the environment continues across the world, including in India. And, the destruction of the environment puts immense pressure on available resources such that access to the remaining resources enhances the prospect of catastrophic war.

Indigenous Resistance

Most importantly, for our purposes, Chomsky also sketched an alternative to these entrenched ideologies by applauding the resistance against these policies raised by the indigenous people congregating at the margins of Canada's much-flaunted multicultural society. "It is pretty ironic," Chomsky remarked, "that the

so-called 'least advanced' people are the ones taking the lead in trying to protect all of us, while the richest and most powerful among us are the ones who are trying to drive the society to destruction" (Lukacs 2013).

The general lesson is hard to miss. Notice the expression "all of us." The resistance by the indigenous people to the extraction of hydrocarbons not only saves the environmental niche of these people in New Brunswick and Alberta, it is protecting all of us, the species. In contrast, the rational choices enforced by the ideologies and the institutions controlled by the rich and the powerful are driving the human race towards extinction. It is, thus, an issue about the salient authorship of knowledge.

The issue of knowledge emerged vividly nearer home in the jungles surrounding the Niyamgiri hills in the state of Odisha. These hills contain about 1.8 billion tonnes of high-grade bauxite, the source for aluminium, which a mining giant—euphemistically called "Vedanta"—wants to extract to feed into giant factories built on this land. As they were pushed out of the plains by the thrust of mainstream civilisation, the local poor, mostly tribals, had lived on this hilly land for thousands of years. After years of resistance by them, and much manipulation and show of muscle by the state, financed by the mining oligarchy, the government was compelled to organise a referendum for 12 carefully-selected villages when the fate of hundreds of villages was involved (Kothari 2015; Vanaja 2014).

As one of many moving studies reports (Bera 2013), using the democratic and peaceful resource of their own panchayats—units of local self-government—village after village gathered en masse amid heavy security cover of central paramilitary and state forces. Ignoring the guns and bayonets,

'unlettered' forest dwellers—Dongria Kondh and Kutia Kondh tribals, and Gouda and Harijan non-tribals—spoke of a religion embedded in the hill's pristine ecology.

They told the district judge, appointed observer to the meetings by the apex court, that mining will destroy their god and their source of sustenance—over

100 perennial streams, fruit trees like those of jackfruit and mangoes, spices like turmeric and ginger, wild roots, tubers and mushroom, apart from the land for shift and burn cultivation, *dongar*, where they grow an enviable mix of native millets, pulses and oil seeds (Bera 2013).

Having said this, each village unanimously rejected the Vedanta project. Niyamgiri hills survived. For now.

Mark the word "unlettered," as used by the reporter. The people themselves ratified this perspective of illiteracy. Tunguru Majhi, a Kutia Kondh tribal, declared at the Kunakadu palli village council meeting, "We will die like Birsas Munda and Rindo Majhi (both Munda and Majhi led tribal uprisings against the British) if you don't give up now. We are a *murkhya jati* (illiterate people) who will never listen to you" (Bera 2013). This illiteracy, the absence of letters, the stupidity of the ancient belief in a protecting the god of the hills, might just provide the answer to the question of whether the species will survive after all.

Questioning Liberal Pedagogy

Recall that when he mentioned the resistance by the indigenous people of Canada, Chomsky used the expression "so-called 'least advanced' people" (Lukacs 2013). He is not only referring to their action of resistance, but pointing at their intellectual achievement, without which the action of resistance would not have followed. In contrast, the "rational decisions" reached by formidable intellectuals serving the rich and the powerful lead the species to the verge of extinction. The contest is, therefore, between two opposing systems of knowledge in two different intellectual traditions.

Moreover, Chomsky's contrast between the two traditions implies that, in a crucial historical sense, elite intellectual tradition has failed the species, while the indigenous traditions, in almost total isolation from the elites, opens the opportunity for the continued survival of the species. In the same historical sense then, survival of the species now depends on incorporating marginalised indigenous systems of knowledge into the mainstream. At the same time, there is a need to severely critique and progressively

replace entrenched aspects of elite intellectual traditions, which have ruled the world for at least the last few hundred years in the garb of liberal pedagogy.

What does this scenario mean for education policy? What does it mean exactly to prioritise and adopt the knowledge systems of the *murkhya* to save the species and the planet? In the limited space available to me for now, I will focus on the prospect of incorporating indigenous knowledge in the mainstream education policy. In the process, I will be able to touch barely upon the related, but wider issue of dispensing with much of the current liberal curriculum that generates the mindset for plundering the planet.

Ever since liberal education became the agenda at the turn of the last century, education of the poor and the marginalised has concerned a range of progressive thinkers. I will briefly touch upon two of them—Rabindranath Tagore and Paulo Freire—to suggest why these responses to the issue of the survival of the species are inadequate. There are two reasons why I wish to focus on these authors. First, given the historical problems of modernity, there is already growing awareness that Western liberal education has not lived up to its promise of enlightenment, as noted above. In that context, it is of much interest that both Tagore and Freire are non-Western critics of Western elitism and are well-known for their views on education policy. Second, both direct their attention to the education of the marginalised as a form of universal welfare. How do their apparently egalitarian liberal views fare with respect to the issue of indigenous knowledge?

Education for Fullness

Tagore was deeply troubled by the extreme elitism of the British-enforced education system that catered only to the children of the privileged. As is well known, he was also deeply critical of the kind of education that was imparted, the rote learning that Freire later identified as the “banking” method. Instead, Tagore advocated an enlightened and elaborate version of education for fullness, *sarbangin shiksha*. This included not just the education of the intellect, combining the most

universal aspects of Western and Eastern high culture, but also the education of feeling for the other that extended to feeling for the nature and cosmos. In this sense, he criticised the one-sidedness of an education that only imparted bookish knowledge in a narrow pragmatic sense. His conception of education did not reject the ideals of Western enlightenment, but sought to embed it in a wider conception of learning that, he thought, embraced the whole human (Mukherjee 2013).

There is no convincing evidence that the knowledge systems for “fullness” that constituted Tagore’s conception of *sarbangin shiksha* included the knowledge systems of the unlettered even in its margins. So, his lament about the absence of the poor from the field of education may be viewed as a “humanitarian” lament, not really a “humanistic” one, to use a distinction suggested by Freire and to which I return.

In fact, there is evidence that Tagore viewed the poor and the marginalised as ignorant, dull and voiceless, to whom language needs to be imparted, and hope needs to be aroused in those broken hearts.¹ And, the knowledge that is supposed to enlighten the poor is the high-culture knowledge already imparted to the elite. Needless to say, this task of pulling the poor out of their misery through *sarbangin shiksha* required novel educational practices such as teaching in the mother tongue, using local flora and fauna as examples, active agency of the learner, the *tapovan* model of shunning bounded classrooms and holding learning sessions in the open air, etc. Yet, the knowledge that was so imparted consisted of the products of the elite high-culture, from the *upanishads* to modern science, via literature, art and sophisticated musical forms.

I think the point about the ultimately elitist character of Tagore’s otherwise enlightened conception of education can be strengthened with an example of the novel educational practice followed in Tagore’s school.² Every afternoon, children from Patha Bhavana were transported in the university bus in batches to Silpa Sadana at the rural setting of Sriniketan, the location for rural education and reconstruction. There, we sat down on the floor to learn about woodcraft, papier

mâché, basket weaving, lac work, etc, from the ill-clad and impoverished, but highly skilled village artisans. During that period of active hands-on learning, some of the rural folk were our teachers. Our education, thus, included some of the knowledge systems of the unlettered and a reversal of class roles. No wonder, this novel education practice was soon abandoned due to logistical reasons.

Yet, the point remains that the appreciation and adoption of rural culture was restricted to the “crafts” of a folk nature. Elite, high culture still formed the central ingredient for the development of sensitive intellect. Similarly, farmers are sometimes consulted about various agricultural practices such as variety of seeds, condition of soil, multiple cropping, organic fertilisers, etc. This is the traditional domain of the unlettered where knowledge is accumulated through sheer practice over centuries. Beyond this, rural culture (not to mention tribal culture), except “folk art,” is not ascribed any enlightenment value. The tribals, the indigenous people, are not even in view. They are curiosities hiding in hills and forests.

Humanistic Education

Several decades later, Freire, in his classic work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) addressed the issue of resistance to the ideologies and institutions of the elite more directly (Freire 2005). The task for education, he felt, was to reverse the process of dehumanisation in which the oppressed found themselves:

The struggle for humanisation, for the emancipation of labor, for the overcoming of alienation, for the affirmation of men and women as persons ... is possible only because dehumanisation although a concrete historical fact, is *not* a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed (Freire 2005: 44).

Freire (2005: 53), following George Lukacs, elaborates that a revolutionary educational practice aims to “explain to the masses their own action,” to clarify and illuminate that action, both regarding its relationship to the objective facts by which it was prompted, and regarding its purposes. The more the people unveil this challenging reality, which is

to be the object of their transforming action, the more critically they enter that reality. In this way they are “consciously activating the subsequent development of their experiences” (Freire 2005: 53). Freire insists this form of education to be essentially pre-revolutionary, such that the oppressed can proceed to a revolutionary overthrow of the unjust order. Freire, thus, goes beyond Tagore to view education not only as a humanitarian mode to include the oppressed, but as that which triggers humanisation of the oppressed by enabling them to erect the other side of the barricade. Let us call it the “proletarian” mode.

It is unclear if the envisaged overthrow of the unjust order will in fact enhance the prospects for the species as a whole. The humanised education achieved through the struggle of the working masses will no doubt usher in an era of proletarian freedom. But, will it ensure survival for all? The answer will depend on the content of the proletarian mode, the knowledge systems so advocated. Here, the prospects do not appear to be as

revolutionary as the emancipation of a section of people.

There is little evidence that pre-revolutionary education practices among the masses, undertaken by revolutionary forces, address the issue raised here. In his writings, Freire makes frequent references to political works of Mao during the pre-revolutionary phase. Following these examples and their implementation during, say, the struggles in Yan’an and Vietnam, certain forms of educational practices have emerged. For example, following lessons from Vietnam, Maoists in India have organised Young Communist Mobile Schools (or, Basic Communist Training Schools), which host select groups of 25–30 tribal children in the age group of 12–15 years.

These children receive intensive training for six months in a curriculum consisting of basic concepts of Marxism–Leninism–Maoism, Hindi and English, mathematics, social science, different types of weapons, computers, etc (recall their age group). Needless to say, lessons are conducted in Gondi, and local song

and dance forms are used to motivate the children. Beyond this, there is no evidence that the ancient knowledge systems of the tribals form any significant part of the curriculum, even though the pupils concerned consist entirely of tribal children. In fact, much of the curriculum, including lessons in modern science—especially, weapons training involving not bows and arrows, but automatic rifles, light machine guns, high-powered explosive devices, and the like—go directly against the foundations of tribal culture (Mukherji 2012). While the children in mainstream India sit through modernist curriculum under the aegis of not-so-subtle capitalist propaganda, tribal children sit through the same wearing Maoist lenses. Education is imparted in the proletarian mode, not in the indigenous mode.

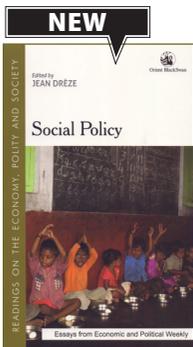
Conclusions

It seems plausible to hold, then, that the most progressive, enlightened forms of thinking on education fail to offer a sustainable perspective on the survival of

Social Policy

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The reach of social policy in India has expanded significantly in recent years. Facilities such as schools and *anganwadis*, health centres, nutrition programmes, public works and social security pensions are reaching larger numbers of people than before. Some of these benefits now take the form of enforceable legal entitlements.

Yet the performance of these social programmes is far from ideal. Most Indian states still have a long way to go in putting in place effective social policies that directly address the interests, demands and rights of the unprivileged.

This collection of essays, previously published in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, has been clustered around six major themes: health, education, food security, employment guarantee, pensions and cash transfers, and inequality and social exclusion. With wide-ranging analyses by distinguished scholars brought together in a single volume, and an introduction by Jean Drèze, *Social Policy* will be an indispensable read for students and scholars of sociology, economics, political science and development studies.

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the species. In some grim historical sense, the prospects seem irreversible because the so-called enlightened conception of knowledge, which is primarily responsible for bringing the species to the brink of extinction, is uncritically assumed to be the only one we have. In fact, liberal education, with its species-terminating edifice of knowledge, is often ascribed absolute value, since any alternative form of education is viewed as either inconceivable or politically incorrect.

What is missed in these universalist proclamations in favour of liberal education is that an entire range of indigenous knowledge systems have existed simultaneously, but in almost total isolation from the modernist liberal knowledge systems. These are not “primitive” or “infantile” systems of knowledge requiring further stages of development. These systems are current “adult” systems of knowledge with their own high culture that have been sustained in favourable environmental niches for thousands of years. If liberal education can claim its historical validity by referring back to the Vedas, Sutras, Euclid and Plato, so do the indigenous systems, except that their classical heritage has remained unnamed in the absence of global propaganda. These systems define the alternative forms of what it is to be human as a species. The only problem is that these systems, with their construction of “gods of Niyamgiri” and reverence for rivers, are viewed as inconsistent with the modernist outlook. But, that certainly is a problem for the modernist, not the Dongria Kondhs.

In other words, a real solution to the issue of survival requires that humans learn to progressively forget—or, at least, engage in severe criticism of—the knowledge systems currently advanced in the most dominating centres of learning. If indigenous knowledge systems, currently resisting extraction of hydrocarbons and bauxite from forests, are our primary route for survival, every bit of knowledge beyond indigenous knowledge must be subjected to serious critique for their relevance.

I am aware of the possible inconsistency in what I am proposing. While the subliminal suggestion is to defray action

on all forms of so-called modernist high-culture, are we not led into this forlorn conclusion precisely by dint of the wonderful scientific work conducted by Mayr and his colleagues at Harvard, which has an annual budget of over one billion dollars? So, is it not imperative that solutions to the dangers posed by the culture of enlightenment are to be found within enlightenment itself? Obviously, there cannot be an immediately satisfying answer to this question either way. So, let me ask a series of rhetorical questions to conclude the discussion.

Can we not view the otherwise wonderful results from Harvard as a *reductio* to the effect that this knowledge need not be pursued anymore? Elizabeth Kolbert has remarked with some irony that let us not ask the scientific question of when the human species might become extinct, because we might be extinct before we reach a definite scientific answer (Drake 2015). Sensible people have started advocating the disarming of the planet. Does that not amount to the demand that the knowledge systems that go into the construction of weaponry—from pistols to hydrogen bombs—be deliberately set aside? Why should that argument not extend to the knowledge of making cars and aeroplanes, since these technologies require extraction of bauxite from revered mountains? Once we get the feel of the mess into which modern living has pushed the planet, why should we stop at cars and aeroplanes? Why not computers, mobile phones, skyscrapers, libraries, orchestras, art museums, cities and asphalt roads? The children of the gods of Niyamgiri lived without them happily for thousands of years. Exactly what argument do we have for not emulating their lives in full?

NOTES

- 1 Tagore, in the poem titled “Ēbāra phirā’ō mōrē” from the volume *Chitra*: “Ē’i-saba mūrha mlāna mūka mukhē ditē habē bhāṣā/ ē’i-saba śrānta śuṣka bhagna bukē dhanjā tulitē habē āṣā.”
- 2 I could not locate any official document for this, but I can recount this curious practice from my own experience as a student in Tagore’s school at Santiniketan.

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