PERSPECTIVE

From Cognitive Elitism to Cognitive Emotional Elitism: Loopholes Need Bridging with "Serene Brain Potentials"

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ABSTRACT

The paper critically examines cognitive elitism, the belief that intellectual ability alone defines merit and leadership. Originating from controversial theories, cognitive elitism marginalizes emotional intelligence, morality, and social values, fostering inequality and social fragmentation. The authors argue that overemphasis on intelligence and academic success undermines empathy, ethics, and inclusivity. To address these issues, the article proposes a transformative concept: cognitive emotional elitism, incorporating the ME3V model—Morality, Ethics, Empathy, Emotional intelligence, and Values. This redefined elitism seeks to balance intellect with humanity, promoting social cohesion, equity, and pluralism. The paper calls for inclusive recognition of diverse cognitive strengths beyond traditional elitist frameworks.

Keywords: Cognition, cognitive elitism, intelligence, emotional intelligence

Human cognition is defined as set of complex higher mental processes and abilities to acquire, process, store, and apply information by means of the key processes such as attention, memory, language, visuospatial abilities. This ultimately constructs the human thought, theory of mind, learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making. Cognitive ability of human being has long been considered as critical pivot in determining behavior, education, employment, and social integrity[1]. Although the term "elitism" has had restricted and cautionary use in traditional education and scientific research[2,3], it encompasses a greater dimensions in sociopolitical and psychological context[4]. Elitism refers to the belief or practice that a society or system should be led, controlled, or influenced by an elites. The elites, in turn, are typically a small group of people who are considered "superior" (upper class) in terms of intellect, wealth, power, education, or social status in comparison with the rest of the society (middle and lower classes)[5]. This article intends to dissect the concept of "cognitive elitism", its fallacies, and the way forward to mitigate the unintended societal nuisances created by so called cognitive elites.

WHAT IS COGNITIVE ELITISM?

The concept of cognitive elitism was popularized by Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray in their book "The Bell Curve"[6]. However, it stirred controversy and is the most controversial and underexplored concept till date. The controversy begins with the notion that cognitive elitism rotates on higher intellectual capabilities or academic achievements. Cognitive elitism refers to the belief or practice of valuing people primarily based on their cognitive abilities—such as intelligence, reasoning, problem-solving, and academic achievement. However, this is garnered often at the expense of other humane qualities like emotional intelligence, creativity, moral character, practical skills, or pragmatism. Cognitive elitists are considered as inherently superior, more deserving, or more capable than others. The concept of cognitive elitism is often reflected through sociocultural attitudes, achievements, and institutional frames[7].

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LOOPHOLES IN COGNITIVE ELITISM – PROBLEMS CREATED BY OVERVALUED INTELLECTUALITY

The basis of controversy surrounding cognitive elitism lies on casual celebration of only intelligence (Fig. 1). Human beings have diverse strengths for survival and construct a society filled with peace, harmony, solace, and safety. Not only intelligence, but also emotional connectedness, moral virtues, artistry, social, and practical skills are essential to construct a functioning society. Reducing worth to intelligence alone is both unfair and harmful to individual and society as a whole. Intellectual supremacy above all often heralds inequity, loosens the clutch of social cohesion, interferes with diversity, and belittles other capabilities of livelihood. Overvalued intellectual prowess and the underappreciated other qualities of human beings (empathy, value, morality, ethics, emotional intelligence, and manual skill) may cause societal unrest.

The loosely cohesive oversimplified association of cognitive elitism and intelligence harbor inequity and misbeliefs in societal integrity. Cognitive elitism reinforces and justifies the existing social hierarchy further patronizing inequalities (especially in education and wealth) seem natural or deserved. For example, students from privileged backgrounds may perform better on standardized tests—not solely because they are more capable, but owing to have more resources. However, the traditional concept of cognitive elitism can frame these outcomes as merit-based. This opens up the window of narcissism, which propels one to take advantage through malicious social networks and media hypes resulting in faulty group beliefs in politics and religion. This further casts its maladaptive impact on sociobehavioral perspective, education, economy, politics, and nation at large[8].

The concept of cognitive elitism stands against the plane of respect of diverse cognitive excellence. Gifted education and financial supremacy often bring the skewing towards cognitive elitism. The egalitarian broader concept of meritocracy, which harbors both talent and hard work inside, has been morphed towards cognitive elitism out of misconceptions and misinterpretation of actual notion of the term. The casual but shrewd intentional use of the term cognitive elitism often disrupt societal integrity in form of compromised education, employment, and public discourse for those who are not so called cognitive elitists. This paves the path for social exclusion, inequity, and injustice. All these ultimately bring forth political nuisances, nurture individual narcissism, and interfere with diversity and fragments the society[9-11].

INTELLECTUAL CUBISM VERSUS COGNITIVE DELINQUENCY

The authors want to coin two metaphorical terms "cognitive delinquency" and "intellectual cubism" in this context. Cognitive delinquency is not a clinical diagnosis, but a rhetoric, which refers to biased, lazy, manipulative, irresponsible, indisciplined, nonreasonable, and noncritical thinking. This encourages believing and spreading false beliefs, fosters herd behavior, leading to social unrest[12]. On the other hand, authors suggest the concept of intellectual cubism inspired from artistic cubism[13]. Similar to artistic cubism where objects are

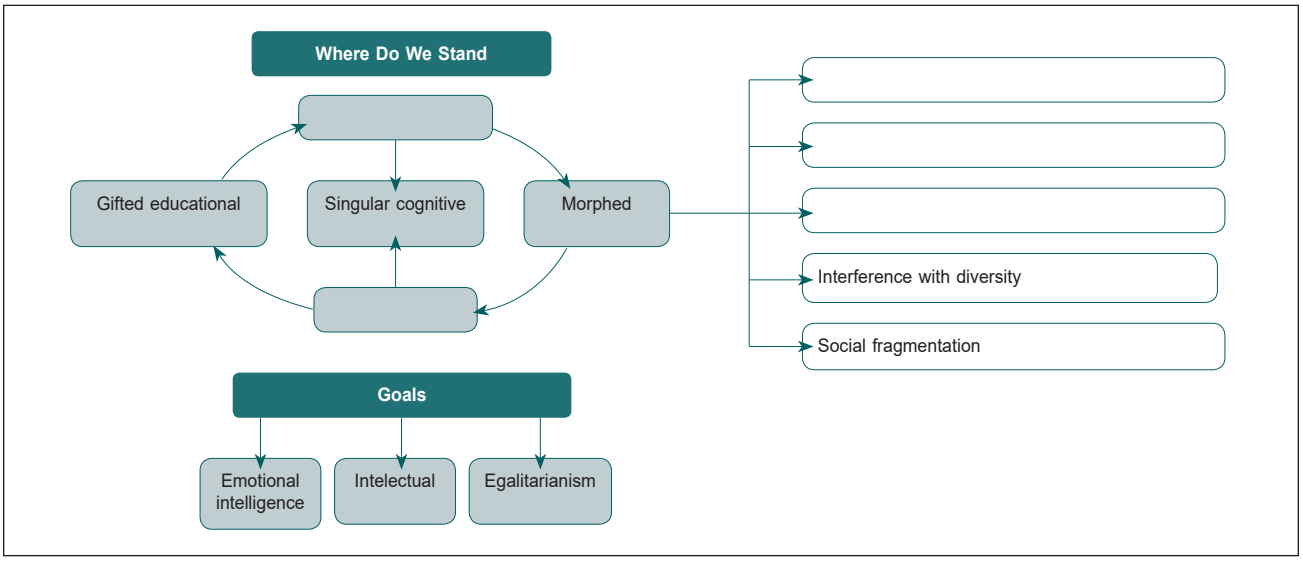


Figure 1. The singular cognitive construct of "cognitive elitism" and its afflictions on humanity and society.

represented from multiple viewpoints simultaneously (often fragmented and abstracted), intellectual cubism inspires one to approach ideas, problems, or concepts from diverse perspectives simultaneously. It embraces holistic viewpoints, contradictions, ambiguity, while rejecting simplistic linear interpretations of facts in the pursuits of deeper understanding of the subject or society as a whole. At an individual level, intellectual cubism encourages cognitive flexibility leading to open-mindedness and resistance to dogmatic or reductionist thinking. With this background, the authors venture to vouch that eliminating cognitive delinquency and perpetuating intellectual cubism will result in ascent from cognitive elitism to cognitive emotional elitism.

SEALING THE LOOPHOLES – FROM COGNITIVE ELITISM TO COGNITIVE EMOTIONAL ELITISM

Indian ethical models (*Dharma*, *Karma*, *Ahimsa*, *Artha*, *Kama*, *Moksha*, *Yoga*) are integrative in its core by combining personal development, social responsibility, and spiritual goals. They emphasize contextual morality, intentions, and self-transformation, balancing individual freedom with universal compassion[14]. In line with Vedic wisdom and its integration with ethical concepts described in modern sociology, psychology (Utilitarianism, Deontology, Kantianism, Egalitarianism), and cognitive neurosciences (affective empathy, emotion perception, and theory of mind), we propose a new model to seal the loopholes in the concept of cognitive elitism.

The missing aspect in cognitive elitism is "serene potential" of brain (Fig. 2). Adding serene potential in cognitive elitism may help in resolving controversies in truest sense. Here we pitch a code name for serene potential of brain that is ME3V. It stands for Morality, Ethics, Empathy, Emotional intelligence and Values. Without these supreme constructs of human brain, bare intelligence is often being used for self and manipulation of surrounding towards self. The ME3V can only help individuals to go beyond self and for greater perspectives heralding harmony, symphony, equity, and justice in society. Cognitive intelligence or elitism without these serene potential often morph towards Machiavellian intelligence leading to social injustice, inequity, and chaos in broader sense[15-17]. This ME3V model is inclusive, simple, and practical. It harnesses wisdom from the ancient texts, utilizes modern ethical models along with scientific basis of cognitive neurosciences.

The need of the hour is a call to change the concept of existing cognitive elitism to holistic cognitive-emotional elitism (Fig. 3). The latter should have brain networks studded with proposed serene potentials, practice of emotional intelligence, respect, reciprocation and egalitarian appraisal of diverse cognitive excellence. The intelligent human mind along with perfect amalgamation of these human qualities can only surpass the trap of cognitive elitism which nurtures favoritism, narcissism, opportunism, inequity, cognitive, and social fragmentation based on gifted education and intelligence.

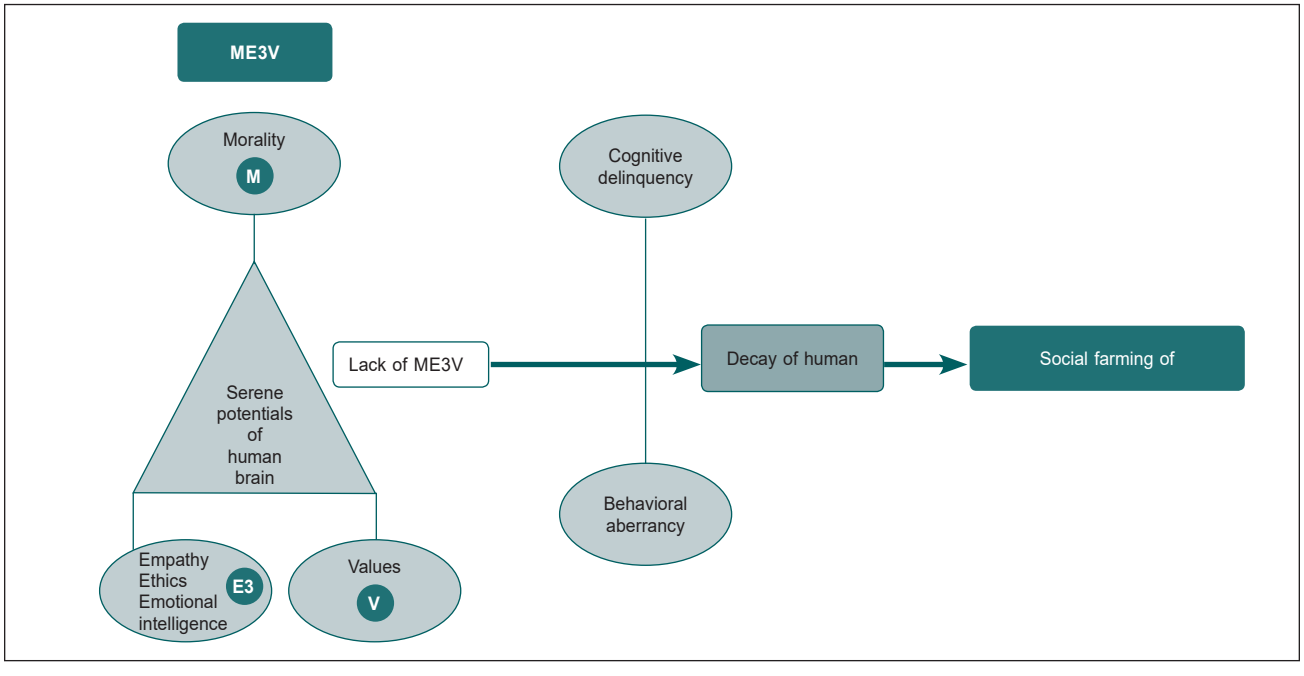


Figure 2. Missing aspects in cognitive elitism- the serene potentials of human brain.

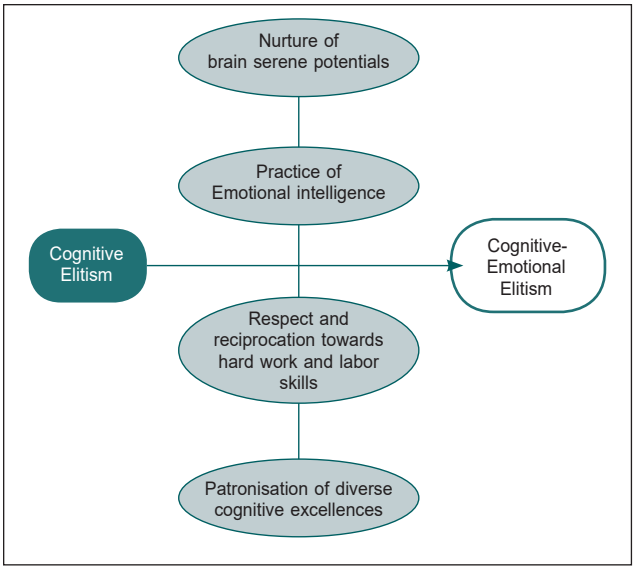


Figure 3. From cognitive elitism to cognitive-emotional elitism - the routes of ascension.

CONCLUSION

Authors propose that true cognitive and emotionally elites are those persons irrespective of formal education having the vision to see future and truth by breaking the nutshell of lie, manipulation, political biases, and false popular social and religious beliefs, with an attempt to execute something great devoid of "The Dark Triad" (Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy)[18]; but blended with morality, altruism, honesty, humility, conscientiousness, agreeability, and novelty seeking attitude[19]. Cognitive and emotional elitism will settle between elitism and populism, and probably patronize pluralism and propel the growth of a diverse and peaceful world[20]. On a sociopolitical perspective, the authors hope that cognitive and emotional elites will have limited aristocracy with greater democratic attitudes to fraught against prevailing social injustice.

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