

# American Stress Scenario Debilitates the Minds: Was it Avoidable with PPP Moves?

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## Abstract

The paper deals with changes in the modern US economy in the New Millennium. Some of these are impacting the personal lives of people - infants, children, the youth, the middle-aged executives, as well as the aged and retired. The challenges result in stress, which is clearly apparent, especially when compared with the not-so-fast paced, sustainable economy of India, where there are lesser chances of people being impacted by stress. The paper discusses how uncertainties of life in different realms could confuse average Americans, compared with near absence of uncertainties in life in India, though economic mobility and urbanization may still be lower. The paper dwells on how the US economy, with very high GDP per capita income, has lent itself to multiple stresses at the family and individual levels, with negligible regulations on all fronts, formal and informal.

**Keywords:** *Flexible labour market, living beyond means, broken marriages, single mothers, two income families*

## Introduction

Stress has become an integral part of civilization. Events in people's lives that are beyond their control lead to stress. An individual in a farm economy stayed cohesively. He could invite his close relatives, say parents and siblings, and they could stay for a reasonable time. His wife generally would not welcome the idea, but adjust happily with minor adjustments. In the organized modern urban life of today, this move could witness a frown from the wife and her asking why was the decision taken unilaterally and without consulting her. As a result, something that was perceived as joy becomes stress for all the parties - the host couple and the visiting relatives. Secondly, aspirations about how the children are going to succeed in life is another trigger of stress. In some families, the mother may be pushy, and the father may be relaxed, and in others, vice versa. That causes differences of opinion among the spouses, causing stress for them. When it comes to pressure on children to excel in studies and devoting too much time to studies, their childhood becomes muted and they are under stress on that account. In an aspirational society where rich and poor have more visibility of each other, the stress levels tend to be higher with a desire to compete and raise the level of happiness and make monetary improvements of the family. However, once the kids grow up, these minor stresses wither away and life becomes simple.

### ***Cost cutting by businesses and government agencies caused huge stress to American job seekers***

Beyond the family, stress is also caused by some economies adopting globalized practices, more so, American practices. Approaching any issue of life in a short time without giving thought to the long term, causes stress. Taking up a job without much thought, and then constantly changing employment for better pay, results in stress for an average American. This short-term approach in America has grown for over a quarter of a century. In the work environment, the so-called innovation of "Freedom at Will" has nearly wrecked the job scenario in USA. It has led to flexibility of the labour market and shifted the bargaining power substantially from the workers to the top management. It all looks nice from the perception of the super-rich employers and the business owners, whose goal is to make as much money as possible. A new term "Cost Cutting" coined by the employers about a decade and a half ago, has led to Temp Revolution. By hiring temps, employers are spared from giving Living Wages and other long term benefits such as health care benefits (Labour laws in the US don't mandate employers to provide such benefits to temps). "Cost Cutting" in American businesses took an ugly form of uprooting manufacturing plants from well-known industrial centres of America and installing these manufacturing plants in foreign lands, mostly in China. China was supported by America to become a global powerhouse of the world with a growing middle class in China and creating a drought of middle class in USA. Once the Temp revolution took roots in America, job layoffs became routine and employees stating having least confidence in employers as far as sustainable livelihood was concerned. Loyalty to the firm and employer reduced to a great extent and the job morale reached an all-time low. Dislike for the boss or team members triggered a desire to change jobs, which made the average American more stressed. The rich employers in US enjoyed an everlasting

party at the expense of the workers, who kept the business going.

Cost cutting through layoffs, now and then, by the employers resulted in another phenomenon termed "Attrition". As a result, employees lost interest permanently and became indifferent to their employers, working in a routine manner only for compensation; this is similar to the situation in earlier established brick and mortar globally well-known companies such as IBM, General Motors, Ford, Chrysler, Intel, Microsoft, John Deere, Boeing, and the like. They started constantly looking for greener pastures, where their compensations would be higher and benefits respectable. Quite frequently, the employees left their job, which was termed "Attrition." In the new millennium, if layoffs were galloping creating "Temp Revolution", employees were also smart enough to indulge in "Attrition", which started rising by tens of percentage points. The saying "As You Sow, So You Reap" came to the fore in the business landscape of USA. These developments made stress ubiquitous, employers fearing loss of efficient teams and teams fearing loss of jobs. Though employers had higher bargaining power, they too were not free from such continuous stressful scenarios. Thus, in USA, there was little escape from the scourge of stress, a phenomenon of their own making due to heightened money greed of firms and other employers.

***American marriage system, based on dating, triggers acute stress to the young men and women***

Americans have erased the arranged marriage system where the responsibility of choosing a bride for the son and bridegroom for the daughter used to rest on parents. It was their headache. Now that headache is internalized by so-called modern men and women, on to themselves and thus, stress exists till dating does not get converted into marriage.

Surveys indicate that 4 to 5 dates fail to convert into marriage in USA. After these failed dating encounters, both genders get used to feelings of stress, off and on, and assignments in the university or project deadlines get automatically delayed during these periods of melancholy. The quality of education and looking for a job turns poor and results in self-criticism and stress.

After multiple years of dating, one fine morning, both genders agree to marry. Introductions are made to both sets of parents and a very low-key marriage ensues with savings and loans where both spouses spend equally. Parents do not spend money on marriages of their children.

Sociology of the environment plays on the minds of the newly married spouses. The social environment of America is fraught with too many marriages on the rocks due to compatibility issues and differences of opinions and minor belligerences. As per figures, more than 50% of marriages fail in the first 4 years. As a result, spouses are prepared for a divorce from as early as the day of the wedding. The whole system of marriage and divorce in America is fraught with huge uncertainties and challenges.

Dedication to the job wanes when one is sure that he/she has joined an organization where layoffs are routine. Similarly, when a man and a woman make a nuptial tie, in a great society where 58% of marriages fail, of which most fail in much less than a decade, the stress begins to build with the thinking that their marriage would also fail, in all probability. More they love each other, more the fear of divorce, which causes them increased stress. Delay in coming home from the workplace raises a minor red flag. A minor improvement in dressing and make-up for women, again raises a red flag. A serious demeanour and less jollity raise doubts in marriages. Easy access to divorce such as 'No Fault' divorces, a ridiculous social practice with the sanction of law, makes marriages in America pretty easy to break. It is as easy as one of the spouses waking up in the morning and declaring a divorce. She/he consults an attorney, who is ever-willing to make divorces happen, as attorneys are very money hungry in USA. Once the attorney comes in contact, the spouses hardly meet or speak. Whether to take a phone call, in which tone to speak with the spouse, what should be the contents of the conversations - all of these very private matters between spouses a few weeks back hitherto, is heavily dictated by the attorney. American acquaintances openly confess that in such a situation, the divorcee is almost a captive of the attorney who makes a lot of money and receives a lot of future referrals from each divorce. As a result of greed for money, advocates are facilitators of divorces as once a case reaches them, it stays with them until the divorce is done.

***The paradigm of fashionable living standards, for most Americans, enforced by tradition; city administration exacerbates debt to disproportionate levels.***

In many Developing and Emerging Economies, an individual could own a house with a room and a rest room; or with 2 rooms and a rest room; or with 3 rooms, living room, a rest room and a kitchen; or a huge mansion with 6 rooms, 3 rest rooms, walk-in wardrobe, jacuzzi; 2-storied home with a big front yard and a backyard, all located in the same neighbourhood. Such a variety of homes could also dot different streets in the same neighbourhood. The political system does not impose any stipulations on

the size of the home, neither does it segregate small homes into one neighbourhood, medium-sized homes into another neighbourhood and luxurious homes, in an exclusive locality. The City Administration has to maintain the same level of sanitation, lighting, parks and libraries. Streetlights would be similar. So the need to live in a sanitized atmosphere with nice street lights, as it happens in developed countries, does not compel citizens to buy homes in high-end neighbourhoods for which they need to borrow more and work more with longer commutes and more jobs a day, to repay loans. Stress levels in Developing Countries and emerging economies arising from this aspect is unknown. People in emerging economies like India, build homes in a well-provided infrastructure, as per the country's standards, even if the homeowner has a small home. Debt levels are minuscule and repaid soon. The compulsion of large loans and repayments, and, as a result, the need to earn more through more jobs and more commutes simply do not arise. In these circumstances, the level of stress arising from home construction and ownership is conspicuous by its absence compared to huge stress that the developed world home industry practices generate.

Living standards in India are not mandated by City Administration. The size of the home is not directly or indirectly imposed by the Government or the City Administration. Manicuring of lawns, involving expenditure, is not mandatory. Each homeowner maintains his/her garden as per his/her financial capability. In USA, the City Administration monitors uniform maintenance of the exteriors, including the lawns, and levies penalties in case of divergence. This extra expenditure on exterior maintenance puts a greater burden on the individual's meagre hourly wages. In case of temp employees, the hours of duty are not fixed per day and it varies from day to day depending on the whims of the supervisor, whether the employee belongs to a different race, is a long term immigrant or recently arrived immigrant. The supervisor in the US Labour Market is a monstrous boss. He decides the work hours per day. He assigns different hours in the forenoon and in the afternoon, based on his whims each day, duration of work each day, total hours in 4 different weeks and finally could, with a frown, ask the employee to leave the job. Working in this atmosphere and wondering each day whether one's job is still going to be there, leaves the employee's mind filled with huge stress.

#### ***IT connectivity vs family relations***

The US talks about connectivity of modern times with stratospheric praise. Thinkers in the US and most members of intelligentsia are euphoric about connectivity. Wire connectivity is highly different from human connectivity. Relationship of generations, inter-spouse relationships, boss-team relationships, employees and ex-employees' relationships are items of connectivity that have witnessed huge southern movement since electronic and communication connectivity have been spiking for 2 decades now. Social relationships have deteriorated as wired connectivity peaks.

#### ***Divorces consequent of job losses and debilitating stress***

At a time, when individuals are suffering from acute stress due to loss of jobs, the home environment turns threatening too. The wife finds it hard to cooperate as she faces monetary scarcity. She is usually depressed and not in a position to pep up her spouse, who is facing a challenge looking for a job. If he fails to get a job in a year, in USA, he knows that his marriage will be on the rocks. This thought makes him more nervous and because of his nervousness, he could flunk in some interviews. Such is his stress, when suddenly one evening or one morning, his home-stay or working wife declares a desire to divorce him and leave along with their children. She leaves home to contact an attorney, who arranges the divorce and alimony documents to be signed by the spouses in a few months.

Then the job-seeking person might land a job, inferior to his previous employment, with a loud and exacting boss. At the end of the day, he would return to a lonely home with no spouse and no children to welcome him. This is a tragedy that the western world is unable to get over, especially the loneliness of men after their divorce. He is forlorn, lonely and deep in stress. A huge cause of stress in America is divorce, though least discussed and debated face-to-face, on TV, in print media or in Hollywood film themes.

For a woman, if she was a home-stay mom, there is no additional economic burden. But if she was an earning mom and earning more than her spouse, then he faces a huge downside, in standard of living also, moving from home, to a one-room apartment or a studio, selling artefacts and furniture to sustain himself. A queen-sized bed replaces a king-sized bed. It's nearly downsizing when a person retires though he could be as young as 30 years.

In India, a couple collectively enjoys a good life and collectively faces social and economic challenges. Divorce is a huge taboo in the family, among friends and acquaintances, also among workplace colleagues and of course, in the neighbourhoods. Leave aside indulging in divorce, a married man or a woman does not ever think of divorce. It is unfortunate that social practices have ebbed so much in USA. It is shocking that when a man is struggling without a job in USA, after being laid off, his wife leaves with

children to give him a divorce. Is it not the ethics of marriage that differentiates humanity from the animal and insect kingdom?

***Media remains aloof about the stress phenomenon of Americans; obsessed with light entertainment***

For such social malpractices there are no talk shows, no preaching in the media, whereas 40% of time is spent by the corporate-owned media in advertising that makes millions of average Americans awash with debt and many bankrupt. Such a destruction of a happy institution of marriage in America would have probably never happened if only there was no blanket order from US Judicial System to a divorcee woman on child custody in her favour. While attorneys, professors, ordinary Americans, medical practitioners, even judges and prosecutors raise their male and female children with equal affection, with no partiality, it never probably occurs to them that their boys are going to be brutes and girls are going to be angels. But when a divorce case is tried in the Court of Law, the custody is invariably given to the woman as though she could raise the children better and children would prefer their mother to their father, all things being equal. The confidence level is high among American women divorcees that in case of a divorce, she is going to have the custody of the children granted by the Judgement. She thinks she has nothing to lose so far as children are concerned, when a divorce occurs. If children's custody would have been distributed, as equally as possible, between the two parents, a woman would have thought multiple times before seeking a divorce, especially on grounds of frivolity such as when a man loses his job and he is not able to land another job within a year or on grounds of lack of compatibility. A woman probably would have not been so proactive to seek a divorce. The facts in America bring out that more women ask for divorce compared to men, by a very wide margin. The female divorcees also certainly go through the stress of addressing multiple jobs, paying bills and missing out on romantic days that she might have spent with her honey. But the semblance of a family with all of their children in place, raising them, having their company, going for outings with them, travelling with them to places of entertainment is very gratifying, despite the divorce from the father of the children. In contrast, the father is forlorn, rarely able to meet the children.

***Divergence of stress configurations between the spouses***

Men might not have the monetary stress, but in addition to missing his spouse, he misses the children as he can't see them. Some are affluent enough to meet them, but only for a day or two may be, in 2 weeks, in case he stays nearby. But in a nation of 50 states, where the layoffs are so routine, their landing a job at different times, in different States also, is plausible. Thus, for men to take leave, to undertake a journey could be expensive for most fathers, to be in regular touch with the children. The indifference that some face, with a new husband for the ex-wife in presence, to meet children, is understandable. In a lot of cases, a lot of venom goes into the ears of children; as a mother, she could complain against their father, incessantly, 365 days of the year. A lot of stories could be made up to hide her own faults, in the divorce, as a caveat, as growing children do not spare mothers about their faults resulting in separation from their father.

The mother's multiple casual affairs and even multiple marriages embarrass the children, creating a psychic impact on their minds. These developments affect their concentration in studies and they lose on student test scores and nicer jobs. Most of these children land jobs as associates, the dead-end jobs, in the retailing service industry, rather than academic jobs, research jobs, technological jobs, which are high paying.

***Stresses build since childhood, due to social aberrations in American society***

They see poverty passed on to them from their single mothers. They grow up with huge stress, of near absence of a father figure, unable to trace their father and sometimes never able to meet him in life, as often, the mother might have not kept track of their father. Many children, for such reasons, neglect their mother during her old age. Many fathers, forlorn and lonely, take to alcoholism and even drugs, destroying their lives with unceasing stress. Many end up at homeless shelters, with no contact from their ex-wife and children. Many of them would not be able to give contact addresses of the ex-wife and their children, a scenario that enervates their persona to precipice. The purpose of being alive is lost to many such fathers. They are aghast when corporate America and the Government keep talking about schemes for women's empowerment.

Studies in school suffer from roughened psyches of children of broken homes. Many join gangs; gang wars occur with school children in large numbers dropping out of school. They face a lot of stress of being in the gang and having a combative approach to other gangs. Many such children from broken homes take to drugs and also peddle drugs for quick money, presumably supplied by wholesale drug mafia. For peddling drugs, these teenagers are often caught by the police, especially in minority neighbourhoods, to be incarcerated for a few years. After incarceration, they live courtesy State expenses, either in Government homes or jails, as no employer wants to employ them.

Children in rich neighbourhoods also do drugs to a certain extent, but the drugs supplied to them by mafia of drug wholesalers do not attract the law. Hence, they are not caught by the police and they are not incarcerated. They get employment and get on with their lives.

***Minority neighbourhoods and incarceration of the teenagers***

I noticed that for a number of minority families, incarceration is not an exception, but a norm. The stories of slaves being ill-treated by the whites were unnecessarily circulated by the black elders, among the black children and grandchildren, which damage their minds and create an undesirable bias and fear against the white community. This was avoidable. These stories had the potential of injecting violence in a lot of teenage men and them forming gangs. These stories influence them to such an extent that some of them could go to jail with a feeling that they too are facing the same exploitation that their great grandfathers faced – being enslaved, working without wages, being beaten and bought and sold like commodities. The shame of incarceration was lost due to these stories. Even parents of incarcerated children often do not feel ashamed and they don't bother to berate their children. They take incarceration as serendipity – their children were caught while others who peddled drugs were not caught. That could be true, to a certain extent.

***Lack of role models among minorities result in crimes***

One of my students sought permission to leave a few minutes before class completed so that he could visit his younger brother in jail. His younger brother dropped out of high school, joined a gang and threatened someone in a car to give him cash. I was aghast. He mentioned that he wishes his brother could have been like him, calm and the studious type. To add to my surprise, he expressed anguish that his mother went to the extent of asking for a week's parole to celebrate her jailed son's birthday. On that day, friends, families and acquaintances were invited and a cake was cut with a happy birthday song for his younger delinquent brother. That is the level of indifference a 14-trillion-dollar economy exhibits in not making efforts to morph such negative attitudes which tantamount to making no efforts to remove the scourges of this nature from American society. The Media is not bothered and the lawmakers seem unconcerned. Corporate America does not solve such problems even as a pilot project in poor neighbourhoods in some states inhabited by the minority. He was asking "Professor, are we moving as a society to a nicer future?" I had no answer. Millions of families in minority neighbourhoods may have clean core families with no criminal family backgrounds, but it may be hard to find their extended families without some criminal records or not having the capacity to recognise the great value of marriage. Further, because of the inclusive nature of extended minority families, even crime-free clean families cannot generally detach their relationships with crime-infested extended families. That is one of the reasons why renting a house or selling a house is generally denied in majority neighbourhoods, though it is illegal to make such refusals. Of these, the smearing of the black families start with incarcerations, from peddling even small quantity of drugs, ill maintained schools and poorly paid teachers, in minority neighbourhoods. Not recognising the holy institution of marriage and allowing them to be broken by 'No Fault' Divorces as a result of legislation in the 1980s and too much tolerance in society to the breakage of homes, have exacerbated manifold challenges in American society. People live in perpetual stress for these familial challenges, including millions of children.

***Segregation of neighbourhoods, covert racism in funding public schools in poor areas toboggan the educational levels of a lot of Americans, across generations.***

Children tend to go astray in middle class families when the father disappears from the scene as a result of the mother divorcing him, or vice versa, using a quick 'no fault' divorce. The standard of living dents and she has to move to a poor neighbourhood, which is likely to have a poor School District with poor infrastructure and ill-paid bad teachers.

Among the poor families, due to children dropping out of school, inter-gender physical relations climb without the boundaries of marriage. That is why very young teen females deliver babies from very casual meetings with young men, whose addresses even they often do not know. In some cases, they know the addresses, but they do not maintain relations with them due to immaturity. Such behaviours multiply, as having more children implies, as per the US Government Welfare Measures, more child support per month for a mother of multiple children. Child support money could easily feed the mother too, even if she prefers not to work for several years. The US Government gives free project housing to such single mothers, indirectly encouraging child poverty, bad standard of living, denting moral hygiene, where a teen could produce four children from fathers, outside the boundaries of marriage. Such children grow up very confused, as the norm that they see in their society is that in a family, children belong to the same mother and same father. In such cases, as marriages have not taken place, even the divorces will not go through. Judgement arising from divorces, alimony to the wife and child support to the children, therefore, may not arise.

***Men face extreme familial stress, compelled to live away from spouse and all of the children due to marriage breakdowns***

Among middle class divorces, the Judge will order alimony for the divorcee wife and child support for children. There is a Government Department, which helps the divorcee females receive these payments from the divorced husband. The honest divorcee men pay the child support even at the cost of their standard of living going heavily south. They even pay the alimony. But sometimes, they find out that the ex-wife has not been married, but she stays with someone permanently, without marriage registration, due to society's high level of tolerance. A number of such cases occur in USA, where honest men are cheated by the divorcee women for decades hollowing out most of his earnings. Where the man feels cheated and angry, he

may avoid paying alimony, on one pretext or the other. Many may default and it is very hard for the US Government to trace them. Some men may become irregular in payments when they are laid off or join an inferior job or remain between jobs for years. Social aberrations have reached such a point that if men remarry and a second wife also divorces him, they have to pay 2 alimonies. If they have children with the second wife, they have to under law, pay child support to children from the second wife also. In this situation, the financial condition of even reasonably well-earning men becomes precarious, with huge debts and nil savings. Does it explain why Americans have no savings or miniscule savings; 58% of men have to go through all these financial challenges arising from divorces and financial responsibilities, inflicted by the social laws. The levels of stress emanating from such social aberrations and mindless social laws can be gauged.

***Natural calamities in USA are frequent and leave calamitous effects occasionally***

Natural calamities at regular intervals bring negative surprises to their victims, who lose a lot of organized life, properties, institutions and even jobs. Resettling takes years and is filled with uncertainty. The levees got damaged in New Orleans and the natural calamity saw economic and social downsides of life. The calamity devastated the city, its people, homes and other buildings and homelessness increased for the poor, who were relocated after suffering for a while. Many of them settled back, when the water receded, to live in their damaged homes in the most disorganized manner. Government help did not come fast because, it is alleged, New Orleans was a city overpopulated by the minorities.

Whenever speculators draw money from banks and speculate on Wall Street, the sufferings reach the masses, as the speculators lose a lot of money and cannot repay their loans taken from banks. The banks mindlessly lend to speculators, drawing from the deposit money of the average American people. As a result of the excessive borrowings of well-to-do Americans and speculation in the financial markets, several thousand banks failed in the 1930s, during the Great Depression, and faith in the banks eviscerated. Businesses failed to get credit. As a result of closure of businesses, joblessness mounted. It is during depression the food pantry by the Church and the Government agencies sprang up. None could anticipate such downsides in the economic scenario when millions will become jobless and dependent on Government doles. Government started a guarantee program up to a financial limit of 250,000 dollars in case of a bank failure. The Great Depression caused a huge uncertainty in the future of the average American till FDR brought his New Deal policies to resuscitate the US Economy.

***Economic and financial crises lead to a lot of money being diverted to bail out large financial institutions and banks, at the expense of "Welfare Measures" that cause vicissitudes for the American poor***

Again, the average Americans faced uncertainty when welfare measures to improve their conditions received much less money as the US Government readily agreed to give financial support to the failing, fledgling Savings and Loans institutions suffering from the banking crisis. Speculators were responsible for this crisis. It was the result of excessive lending by the banks for housing, without much due diligence to ascertain if the debtor could repay loans. Savings and Loans Banks experimented with globalization in banking to extend loans in Mexico, where most of the borrowers heavily defaulted. Then S and L went with a begging bowl to the US Government to save them and the Government, without bothering about the moral hazard, kept pouring money into them. The money poured in S and L Institutions were taxpayers' money, diverted from welfare funds meant for the average and poor Americans. This again came as a surprise to average Americans causing uncertainty of sustainability of a semblance of welfare measures over the decades. This was the cause of huge stress among those who were traditional welfare recipients.

Politicians have gone out of the way to avoid providing State Financed Health Care as a result of incessant lobbying for over a century by Health Care Institutions, the extremely powerful Pharmaceutical Industry and Health Insurance Industry. These constitute a solid oligarchy, which the US Government has been supporting. Corporations were expected to pay the bills for Health Insurance of the corporation employees. The inflation in Health insurance industry and Pharmaceutical industry has been cantering over decades. In the 1980s, the corporations realized that the brunt of payment of health insurance for all the employees was too heavy a burden for its annual budget. Then they abandoned their responsibilities to cover the health care of their employees financially. Those corporations who now pay health care insurance, pay pittance and the remaining corporations have abandoned paying workers any health care insurance. To avoid these expenses completely, Temp Job Revolution has been unleashed by Corporate America as Temps are not entitled to any benefits, long term or health care. It has brought about huge savings to the corporation budgets, but it has inflicted immeasurable woes on the average Americans as either they have to take insurance for health care independently or they have to be gutsy enough to go without any health insurance. This uncertainty with policy changes in corporations created a huge uncertainty about self health care, spouse's health care and children's health care. In fact, it also delayed marriages and having children, as the affordability to take health insurance for a married couple or a family with children was simply wanting. Health care of 44 million Americans has landed in uncertainty. They don't know how to take prescription drugs, when they need them. They don't know where to go when

children become ill. They don't know when someone meets with a road accident and gets severely injured, how to handle the finances for medical treatment and hospitalization. This is a huge amount of uncertainty. Seeing a private Medical Doctor in USA or going through a simple procedure without health insurance could be very daunting and these caused a huge health care uncertainty for health care uninsured Americans. Despite huge opposition by the Republicans, the Democrats under the leadership of President Obama, provided some relief, but attempts are made all the time by vested interests such as the Pharmaceutical Industry, Health Insurance industry and to say the least shamelessly, even the Doctors, represented by the American Medical Association, to prevent providing universal health care to Americans.

Job loss is another trigger for stress of Americans of all ages - not merely the young as it is in India. This happens due to the euphemistically described process of Flexible Labour Market, which denies any Security of Tenure in jobs.

With job loss, there are several uncertainties, namely, sudden precipitous fall in status and standard of living, admission of the children to school districts with schools of arcane infrastructure and teachers, who are known to be less competent and low paid.

In some cases, when the man loses his job and fails to get another job in a few months, he could also simultaneously face huge uncertainty of losing the company of his family (his spouse and his children) forever. The women in America tend to find facing vicissitudes hard to deal with, and seek a divorce. Divorces tend to cause a lot of stress due to loneliness.

Most of the job losses accompany evaporation of savings during the time between jobs and incurring of huge debts to support oneself or even one's family.

It appears insane that in a 16-trillion dollar economy, security of tenure is not given to employees, while countries from where most Americans have immigrated, and across the Atlantic, have installed Welfare State and universal health care, supported by the State.

Huge stress is caused by lack of Health Insurance for self, spouse and growing children, as tens of millions of Americans anticipate occasional illness and they realize that in such a case, the patients may not be able to see a doctor and take prescription medicine. They also know that if the eyesight is affected, they would find it very hard to get their eyes tested and glasses made. In case of a severe toothache, they are aware that without a Dental Insurance, which they cannot afford, they cannot see a dentist and further dental deterioration is not ruled out. Thus, expensive medical treatment based on Health Insurance causes huge stress to tens of millions of Americans.

Children of single mothers or even two-income poor families, no matter how intelligent, would find it very hard to have access to higher education. The cost of higher education has been high and is further rising, which results in a very high level of frustration and stress. Had convergence in compensation been in place and the divergence wasn't very sharp, access to good living standards would probably have been easier. Increasingly, over the last 3 decades, a huge divergence has arisen between college educated employment seekers and high school educated employment seekers. Those ambitious to improve their standard of living are aware that they would find it a challenge to obtain student loans if none of the parents could stand surety.

### ***Racial group stress***

When minorities see their school ill-maintained with no funds to repair and very average, ill-paid teachers, they lose interest in going to school. They start loitering in the neighbourhood, forming gangs, obtaining small cheap weapons, which becomes a regular pastime and perpetuates poverty across generations. Their morale goes deep south. They don't believe in what the politicians say about improving conditions of the poor and access to education. When the government further reduces the already low welfare funding, their hopes are belied and uncertainties about their own future is topmost on their mind. All of this coalesces into stress in the minds of the inhabitants of poor neighbourhoods, who start disliking the mainstream and lose faith in them.

### ***Middle class stress***

Children of middle-class neighbourhoods were astonished to see that their fathers and uncles were a part of one-income family and mothers were happy to be at home without being concerned about debts. Moreover, their own compensation in the 1990s were higher than today in 1990s dollars and they are increasingly compelled to morph into a two-income family, sometimes both spouses working two jobs to pay monthly bills for a middle class living standard. They feel disheartened about their circumstances. They don't have time for themselves, for romance in the marriage, for their own old parents and siblings. They

cannot give time to their children. They slog under the supervision of the boss and the workplace, where even going to the rest room and returning from lunch are clocked for adverse comments. For their parents, payment of monthly bills was a breeze. Further, they had access to higher education for all their children, funded not by federal loans or student loans, but by their father's earning. When the present generation sees that they have no disposable money to invest in the stock markets and leverage to earn market gains, they feel utterly frustrated. All these frustrations combine to create a high amount of stress in the minds of Americans, often leading to depression. Growth in the number of depressed citizens results in income for psychologists, counsellors and psychiatrists, in addition to their already high and rising income. Psychiatrists today in America make a lot of money and so do the makers of anti-depressants; about 45% of Americans cannot sleep at night without using anti-depressant pills, which is more essential, than probably a sumptuous dinner.

Stress could be categorized as familial stress, monetary stress, employment stress and health stress.

Monetary stress could harm the mind of individuals belonging to middle class, more in a society with overarching features of money greed, along with familial stress and employment stress. Even the rich people in USA cannot escape familial stress, which could cause a lot of grief. A class of women has emerged whose purpose of marriage for decades now has been to marry a very rich man, to secure a will for his properties and to lead a day-to-day stunningly fashionable life. They are known as Money Diggers in American parlance and they target very rich people - both married and unmarried. Married men with their inducements of proximity would be ready to divorce the incumbent wife, with whom he may have several children, to marry the Money Digger with passion. These money diggers are invariably ready to marry a rich man, not for care, personality or love, but for living an affluent life. They could be much younger than the man, may be 30 years younger; often, the man may be in his 60s, 70s or even 80s. They are seen romantically moving about with their very rich husbands in downtown New York, Chicago and LA. Average Americans could spot them from the difference in their age and a romantic air between them. Such gold diggers may also sometimes be on the sly, in close relationship with their actual date or love who they would have liked to marry, but have foregone that to obtain wealth from these rich old men. Hence, some American with excessive wealth and liquidity may smear the institution of marriage, where loyalty of the wife could be in heavy deficit and exhibition of caring for the husband could be in stratosphere. Such men are not happy with the marriage, in due course of time, as they realize their folly and face the neglect of their earlier wife and children. They sometimes discover and sometimes guess that their gorgeous young current wife, in all probability, could be in contact with someone, far younger and thus, the marriage may be a fact of total lack of loyalty, blighting the institution. This thought occasionally may give the old rich men stress, as it is unreal, artificial and is available to them only because they have lots of money.

It will be hard to find this species of the super rich in most other countries. There may be rich people, but living a sophisticated life with their wife and children and grandchildren; they may be running many businesses with the desire to earn sustainable profits or participate in philanthropy. In the US also, there have been some fantastic super rich people participating in the noble cause of philanthropy, busy in business of their economic activities, even during a ripe old age, genuinely remaining happy, with the absence of stress. But they are a minority.

Anxiety when economic recession is likely to arrive is a huge stress for a lot of the poor and the middle class. They have come to believe that recessions will come and go periodically in USA, unlike other developed countries and also emerging economies, but it results in stress when it arrives. Coping with a recession is another financial and joblessness challenge that tens of millions of American households have to face. During a recent recessionary period, most Americans faced huge stress. Some recessions do not directly cause stress and grief. Some like the Housing Bubble and Economic and Financial meltdown of 2007-2008 could be devastating.

The arrogance of the rich and their desire to keep the American poor in perpetual financial challenges, unable to improve economic conditions, led them to manipulate the banks, Investment Banks and the mortgage industry, to design a new financial product of Home Equity. Home equity was designed as an opportunity for homeowners to borrow equivalent to the rise of the home prices. So the rise of home prices, instead of being perceived as a negative phenomenon, like any other product, like vegetables, gas for the vehicles and the like, was described incessantly in the media, as an opportunity for the home mortgage owners to tap their home equity and borrow as a blanket money to spend on any item. Some borrowed to lead a better life, to go on vacations, to give gifts to the girl friend, to go international, to buy expensive dresses, suits and jewellery, just to splurge money, as though it was for free.



Home Equity was made an ATM to make a fool of the homebuyers. Homebuyers were buying and shifting to new homes in the hope of enjoying life with extra money, drawn regularly as the home prices went up, from the ATM of Home Equity. Once there was a precipitous fall in home prices, all of these Home Equities, ATMs crashed and prices were much lower than the mortgages, increasing the intensity of debt for millions and millions of middle class home owners, prime home owners and also millions and millions of subprime borrowers. Then started the surfeit of home foreclosures and the families had no place to go, but to tread to the homeless shelters, as relatives do not give shelter in America, unlike in Asia, during such financial vicissitudes, even when they have a lot of space in their homes, with empty bedrooms and restrooms, for usage. Accommodating relatives in financial distress has been unknown in America and such Asian inclusive feelings do not exist in that economy. Intra family trust levels, in general, are low. Inter neighbour trust levels are still lower. Inter colleague trust levels in the workplace are low too. Even management and labour do not have any trust subsisting. As a result of this housing bubble burst, huge loans became sour, overdue defaults multiplied in millions and credit dried up in thousands of banks. Several thousand banks were closed with lots of depositors losing a lot of money, beyond the limits of \$250,000 of FDIC. These series of events mounted stress levels of tens of millions of households, to stratospheric levels, with joblessness, living in homeless shelters and children being shifted to much poorer schools of very low standards. Tens of millions of middle-class Americans slid down to the poor class during the Great Recession, which almost looked like the Great Depression.

Thus, the US economy is replete with moments of lots of anxieties. There is no dearth of stress centric lives' moments, of which a lot of them are avoidable. Benevolent measures could have been in place to achieve a fine prudent combination of moves of corporatocracy, US Governments/ public policy, roll back of money greed of the rich, the super rich and thinking long term future of USA. Short term approach to measures in the US Governance and American life has brought the US economy to multiplicity of challenges in the beginning of the new millennium, beginning with the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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