

Beat: Technology

GEEK HERESY RESCUING SOCIAL CHANGE FROM THE CULT OF TECHNOLOGY

KENTARO TOYAMA EX-MICROSOFT PROGRAMMER

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USPA NEWS - Kentaro Toyama, computer expert is trying to warn us from being addicted to technology and not seeing that people are the key to social change and not smart tools we used. He just published a book 'Geek Heresy : Rescuing Social Change from the Cult of Technology' dealing with this issue...

Kentaro Toyama, computer expert is trying to warn us from being addicted to technology and not seeing that people are the key to social change and not smart tools we used. He just published a book 'Geek Heresy : Rescuing Social Change from the Cult of Technology' dealing with this issue. From his experience in India, he came to the conclusion that technology is not the 'magic cure' export his employers from Microsoft seemed to expect.

In his book, he writes 'hard to take. I was a computer scientist, a microsoft employee, and the head of a group that aimed to find digital solutions for the developing world. I wanted nothing more than to see innovation triumph... But exactly where the need was great, technology seemed unable to make a difference.'

In 2014, in Time Magazine, Lev Grossman made a point talking about internet being largely irrelevant to people without running water and basic education ; that there are dangers to trying to solve human problems with an engineering mindset.

The largest problem is that we, in the society on a large scale, seem unable to put up any substantial opposition against large corporations fortifying their skyscrapers of inequality as long as they can make even the flimsiest case that they are contributing to the public good.

When Kentaro Toyama left India (where he was missioned), he started to think more widely about the difference in expectation and reality as to the assistance afforded by technology in education. In 2010, Kentaro Toyama left Microsoft to take up a research fellowship at the University of California, Berkeley, and began to work on a thesis that finally became 'Geek heresy : Rescuing Social Change from the cult of Technology'.

He wrote 'We are unable to entertain alternatives to tech-driven, capitalist, liberal democracy, so we pronounce (technology) the ultimate salvation.'

Since a while, we live in the sweet spot of the secular, pluralistic, do-as-you-please individualism that the Western world has so long clamored for, and from which politics is singularly unable to escape. This is exactly the problem. Most dollar-a-day people will tell you over and over that what they most want is better earning opportunities for themselves, healthcare for their families, and education for their children.

Yet time after time, they will also spend what little income they have on mobile phones and value-added services. Meanwhile, many local cultures and communities oppose the Internet because so much of the dominant use is by young men playing video games and watching porn. Freedom is the basis by which corporations seduce unsuspecting consumers so long as it isn't causing them biological harm.

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