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EMPOWERING TIMES



THINKING ALOUD
Crime against Humanity
Jay

PODIUM
D. Sivanandhan
Managing Trustee
Roti Bank



WE RECOMMEND
Talking to Strangers
Malcolm Gladwell

Dear Reader,

India ranked 94th out of 107 countries on the global hunger index in 2020, much lower than Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal. Poor implementation processes and lack of effective monitoring in tackling malnutrition, grim performance by large states in food distribution and improper supply chain management have led to this gloomy landscape. This picture worsens as a huge US\$ 14 billion worth of food products are wasted annually in India.

Various studies have implied that the pandemic-induced economic crisis would have a cataclysmic impact on the poor globally and be severe in India which is already home to the maximum number of people in poverty. We have a long way to go to ensure that people do not go hungry to bed and are at least assured of a well-balanced meal to bring down the numbers affected by the 'hunger virus'.

ET this month looks at the '**The War Against Hunger**'. In the **Thinking Aloud** segment, **Jay** shares his thoughts on hunger being a crime against humanity and insists that this complex problem needs to be tackled with the same urgency as we have shown for the Covid-19 virus. On the **Podium**, 'Food warrior' & Managing Trustee of Roti Bank **D. Sivanandhan** shares his thoughts on the importance of bridging the gap between hunger and surplus food to bring down the increasing hunger numbers in India. In the **We Recommend** section, **Malcolm Gladwell's** book - **Talking to Strangers** - studies the interactions and assumptions that people make when dealing with strangers. Backed by the concept of "Default to truth" the author observes how human beings are by nature trusting of everything which sometimes can lead to tragic outcomes.

In **Figures of Speech**, **Vikram's** toon 'weighs' himself on the hunger scale!



Please also [Click Here](#) to check out our Special issue of ET, which is a collation of selected themes that were featured over the years highlighting the changing landscape of the business world. This special edition has been well received and can be [Downloaded Here](#) for easy reading and is a collector's item.

As always, we value your opinion, so do let us know how you liked this issue. To read our previous issues, do visit the Resources section on the website or simply [Click Here](#). You can also follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) & [LinkedIn](#) - where you can join our community to continue the dialogue with us!

THINKING ALOUD

Crime against Humanity

Jay

Covid-19 has taught the world many lessons. The impact of globalization was felt like never before as for the first time in the history of mankind a disease spread across continents aided by the speed of global travellers who took a local virus from Wuhan from place to place with every human interaction converting it rapidly into a pandemic. The tragic death of millions underscored the fragility of our existence apart from disrupting global supply chains that has dented the industrial process causing it to screech to a halt like never before. With countries reeling under recessionary forces, it was time to revisit the basics of domestic life. The joy of simple living was rediscovered and strangely made headlines with people discovering that a consumption culture was not truly required for generating happiness at home.

Another lesson reiterated under tough conditions was the old adage that necessity is the mother of invention. Pushed to the wall, geographical boundaries and artificial barriers of corporations and bureaucracy were ignored as scientists harnessed technology in a novel manner in their search for a vaccine to combat the Covid-19 virus. The synergistic efforts across multiple research centres spread in different nations has led to the creation of not one but several vaccines so far, with more in the offing soon. This unbelievable productivity manifested not just due to the competitive impulse of private firms but also from the extra-ordinary collaboration between agencies of the bureaucracy who normally are cold to overtures of partnership with individual firms. While money is a good lubricant to speed up scientific studies, clearly it is not the primary fuel as scientific innovation is the result of collective knowledge & the ingenuity of researchers. And, thereby hangs a tale of global collective endeavour driven by desperation in the race against the raging epidemic.

The pandemic also displayed what happens when societies cannot get their collective act together. A blatant reminder was the scores of hungry faces not just of the homeless or the migrant labour trudging back clutching their meagre belongings but also those who were left without any social safety net at a time when industry grinded to a halt. The story of hunger and deprivation is usually associated with developing nations but the dark underbelly of capitalist America was brought into focus with the long food lines in major cities too.

Which begs the question: why cannot the world tackle the real pandemic - the hungry populace that has been neglected by societies all over for centuries. Why has modern science, technology, global capital, innovation and all things wonderful not been harnessed in the truly just cause of the war against hunger?

Consider the numbers: the fight against global hunger is an old one, perhaps as old as history. In 2015 when the Millennium Development Goal was replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals, of the 17 goals, high on the list was 'Zero Hunger', to be achieved by 2030. According to the Global Hunger Index we are not close to this target in any way and in fact in 2020 there has been reversal in progress. The Index reflects aspects about undernourishment, child mortality, child stunting (children with low height for their age) & child wasting (children with low weight for their height) and the numbers for India are abysmal. Ranked 94 of 107 countries, India is in the 'serious' hunger category with 14% of our population being undernourished, let alone the figures for children.

Finding an answer to this complex problem needs a combination of policy interventions, food availability, change of diet, education, etc. Obviously this means that it will be a long haul before the benefits of these multi-pronged interventions bear fruit. But it is not an impossible task for a world that can be galvanized to fight a treacherous virus as we have shown just now.

The role of good Samaritans in the interim cannot be underplayed. However, expecting them to provide lasting solutions is unrealistic. Nevertheless, be it Roti Bank, Robin Hood Army or the various neighbourhood social service agencies, in their own limited way these 'food warriors' have launched commendable efforts in tackling another scourge: food wastage. The inequalities of the world are tragically compounded when we find that while there is no food for many, there are some who have no compunction in wasting food. Habits at home can be inculcated at early childhood to value what is on your plate and the same principle applies when it comes to food consumption at other venues. Beginning with collection and distribution of surplus food, well organised agencies have taken

bolder steps towards becoming a source of regular and hygienic suppliers of meals to the needy, drawing on the support of a network of the privileged & well-meaning donors who wish to ameliorate the terrible situation around them.

When will we see the same urgency & resolve of international bodies to harness global talent in science & capital management to tackle global hunger as we have shown for the Covid-19 pandemic? Surely a world where over 690 million are undernourished, 144 million children are stunted, 47 million are wasted and 5.3 million died in 2018 before they turned 5 years, is a world crying out for our attention? If ever there was a crime against humanity, this is one, and the criminals roam amongst us everywhere.

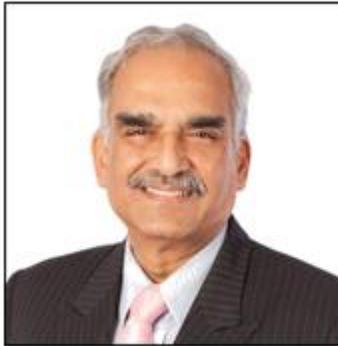
While countries squabble, the 'food warriors' around us deserve our support. Let us join them.

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Podium

D. Sivanandhan

Managing Trustee – Roti Bank



D. Sivanandhan is a highly regarded IPS officer with an illustrious career spanning 36 years. After earning a postgraduate degree in Economics, he joined the IPS in 1976 and retired as the Director General of Police, Maharashtra in 2011. He has held several senior positions in the Intelligence Bureau, Central Bureau of Investigation and Mumbai crime branch. He has also served as Commissioner of Police of Nagpur, Thane city and Mumbai. Mr Sivanandhan has been awarded the meritorious service medal (1993), the president's distinguished service medal (2000) and also the Internal Security Medal (1998). He has worked in the National Security Council Secretariat, New Delhi as a member of the special task force and also as the Security Adviser to the RBI for three years. He is on the Board of several prestigious companies.

ET: India ranked 94 among 107 countries in the Global Hunger Index 2020 and is in the 'serious' hunger category. What are the key factors that have led to such a challenging situation?

DS: India is one of the world's largest food producers and sadly is also home to the largest population of hungry people and one-third of the world's malnourished children. The Global Hunger Index ranked India 94 among 107 countries. The ranking was based on three major indicators - stunted growth among children, child mortality rate, and the proportion of undernourished people in a country.

The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) estimates that nearly 40% of the food produced in India is lost or wasted every year due to inefficient supply chains. A lack of cooling and storage facilities in India also means 20% of the entire food production gets lost before it reaches the marketplace. Industry experts have also opined that

the hunger crisis is not only due to the shortage of food production; surplus food items have been lying in the stores of the Food Corporation of India. Logistical constraints and partial lockdowns hampering workers' movement have increased the pressure on an already stretched food market.

ET: The 'hunger virus' kills about 8,000 children a day and the vaccine for it exists - food. How did the pandemic worsen the hunger situation in India?

DS: The pandemic disrupted local, regional and national supply chains, adding to the impact of the country's food waste problem. The lockdown measures resulted in severe labour shortages, delaying the mid-April wheat harvest by two weeks. In the potato-producing states of Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, increased demand from returning migrant workers pushed up prices by 9% at the wholesale level and 11% in retail.

Imports of food have also stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Partial port operations and the closure of roads and air cargo had also hampered the movement of grains across the country. As people lost their jobs, food insecurity skyrocketed, and the nutrition security worsened among the already vulnerable.

ET: Can you tell us about the Roti Bank initiative and the impact its across India during the pandemic?

DS: In December 2017, Roti Bank, a non-profit, food rescue organization in Mumbai began operations to bridge the gap between hunger and excess food. Nutritious and safe food from restaurants, hotels, and parties were being thrown away, while the other side was starving. A coordinated effort of trained professionals with 10 vans meant that a quick phone call would enable a team of two to arrive at a location, check the quality of food provided, transfer them into safe containers, and serve it to the targeted population the very same day.

While the city stayed indoors during the pandemic, Roti Bank's vans took to the streets. We received many calls across the city asking us to reach neighbourhoods that had stranded workers. Realizing that the task ahead was huge, Roti Bank strategically laid out a plan to feed as many people as we could. Roti Bank partnered with restaurants from Dadar, Borivali, and Goregaon, providing them with raw materials to cook several meals daily. Our own newly inaugurated kitchen in Chembur played a huge part in cooking over 20,000 meals daily. The strategic partnership with the Mumbai Police was essential to ensure that last mile of delivery was facilitated well.

The Roti Bank team pushed forward answering helpline calls, mapping locations and managing operations, all while risking their own lives on the ground to feed our fellow citizens.

Not only has this been a trying time but it has also been a time where we have registered more than 800% growth compared to 2019 and this is all because of the generosity of our well-wishers and donors. We were able to serve 4,608,700+ meals across India which helped in mitigating the rising hunger situation that came about during the pandemic.

ET: Amid all the uncertainty, what is the way forward for Roti Bank this year in addressing the hunger situation in India?

DS: With the help and support of everyone, we were able to surpass our goal of serving more than 2 million meals - we served more than 4 million meals in the year 2020! As we enter 2021, we wish to improve and increase our reach with the same enthusiasm and commitment. Some of our 2021 goals/initiatives include:

- Meals: Increasing daily meals to 10,000 meals in Mumbai.
- Health: Improving the nutritional value of our meals that are being served.
- Equipment: Including two new boilers for hygienic production of eatables.
- Location: Starting few new ventures in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to eliminate hunger and malnourishment.
- Awareness: In 2021, we plan to bring more awareness among children and youth by getting them involved in "migration of hunger" and "joy of sharing".

ET: What is your advice to readers in contributing towards a world rid of hunger?

DS: Some of the points that we can all inculcate are as follows:

1. Shop Smart: Buy perishable items like fruits, vegetables, dairy, etc. in small quantities. Processed food if not consumed within the expiry limit can lead to huge wastage.
2. Track you waste: Keep a log of all the food that you throw away. If an item appears frequently on that list, avoid buying it in large quantities.

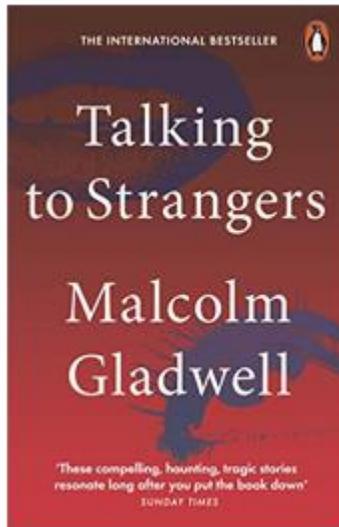
3. Eat those leftovers: Discarding leftover food can lead to huge food wastages all over the world. Eating leftover food is completely safe.
4. Awareness is key: The best way to end world hunger is to learn about the cause. Spread this knowledge among others, join local NGOs and contribute your free time and resources.

We believe that these small steps, if executed correctly, can make a huge difference and if we take care of the basic necessity of a wholesome meal of the poor and underprivileged children, we may just give them a chance to shape a better future for themselves.

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We Recommend

Talking to Strangers Malcolm Gladwell



In the new world where wearing masks and maintaining a safe distance has become a norm, the pandemic has re-defined the way we communicate. Since many of us are cut-off from normal social interaction, voice and video calls have taken over. But what about talking to strangers? Malcolm Gladwell's book - Talking to Strangers - revolves around some points that one needs to bear in mind while dealing with strangers. He takes a deep dive into the assumptions and mistakes while engaging with people we are not familiar with.

To drive home a message, the author looks at various events and talks of people who find themselves in the news for all the wrong reasons. For example: Sandra Bland, the African-American woman whose encounter with a police officer in 2015 led to her arrest and eventual suicide in prison; Brock Turner, convicted of sexual assault in 2016 against an intoxicated fellow student; Amanda Knox, convicted of murdering her roommate in Italy and ultimately exonerated in 2015; Neville Chamberlain and Lord Halifax, who after meeting Hitler felt confident he had no intentions of starting a world war. The underlining aspect of all these events is that all these 'strangers' landed up in an unforeseen situation on learning that they were dealing with people who weren't what they thought them to be.

According to psychologist Timothy R. Levine's theory, we have a "default to truth". Our operating assumption is that the people we are dealing with are honest. This is how people thrive in societies and communities. It is this underlying thought that makes us get out of our comfort zones and try out new things. The opposite bias would

lead to over-thinking, paranoia, mistrustful, and chaos. We tend to 'default to truth' only when we are dealing with people whom we already believe to be truthful.

Based on findings in social psychology, the author also tries to explain why we aren't good at reading people correctly, and are often too quick to explain other people's behaviour in terms of personality traits rather than their situations and culture. Another issue is transparency - the idea that people's behaviour and demeanour - what they represent themselves on the outside - provides a sense into the way they feel within. The first set of mistakes we make with strangers - the default to truth and the illusion of transparency - has to do with our inability to make sense of the stranger as an individual. To make matters worse is when we do not understand the importance of the context in which the stranger is operating.

Malcolm Gladwell is the author of five New York Times bestsellers and the co-founder of Pushkin Industries, an audio content company. He has been included in the TIME 100 Most Influential People list and hyped as one of Foreign Policy's Top Global Thinkers. The book is quite a heavy read than his previous titles. The author has also avoided explaining complex social interactions. A well-researched book, it drives home a message that although it is difficult for us to understand one another, one must not look at a stranger and jump to conclusions but rather look at the stranger's world.

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THROUGH THE LENS



Nature photographer, **Rupesh Balsara** captures a picture of an Amur Falcon known as the world's longest travelling migratory bird. These birds usually fly from China and Russia towards north-east India, mainly Nagaland. They derive their name from the Amur River that forms the border between Russia and China. Since Doyang Lake in Nagaland is better known as a stopover for the Amur Falcons during their annual migration from their breeding grounds to warmer South Africa, Nagaland is known as the "Falcon Capital of the World". The birds are under the 'least concern' category of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List, but the species is protected under the Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, and the Convention on Migratory Species.

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