



June 2015



**Thinking Aloud**

The Missing Pieces That Create Urban Ugliness - **Jay**

**Podium**

Interview with **Viswanath Devarajan**;  
Managing Director/Country Manager – Valmont India

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**Give and Take: A Revolutionary Approach to Success – Adam Grant**

**Standing Ovation**

**The Indian Association for Blind, Tamil Nadu**

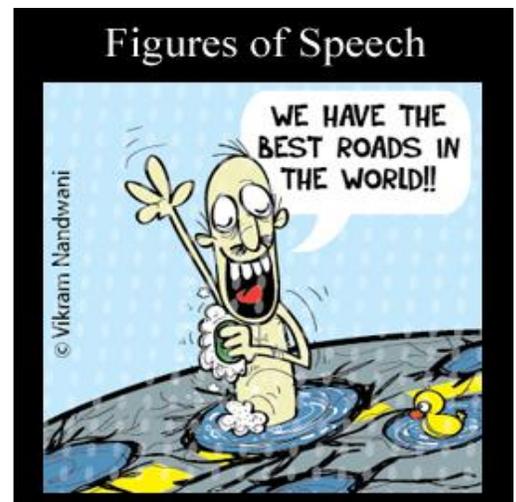
Dear Reader,

With the onset of the monsoons in India comes a sigh of relief from the scorching heat and brings to mind a vivid picture coupled with the sweet smelling scents as the raindrops touch the soil. But this picture gets erased as typical headlines take the limelight during the rains which include crumbling road infrastructure in many parts of the country, 'killer' potholes frequently claiming lives, non-functional traffic signals, massive traffic snarls, floods and the list is endless every year.

According to research reports, India's road network bottlenecks hinder its GDP growth by one to two percent! The World Bank estimates that India's infrastructure could require investments of up to US\$ 1.7 trillion by the end of the decade. Although the country has the second largest road networks in the world, qualitatively, the constraints and issues with Indian road networks differ from one state to another. Huge sums of money is spent on infrastructure, be it roads, drainage, street lighting and other basic amenities every year and it is this time of the year that really tests the government's efforts in keeping up with the quality of infrastructure development, a key driver in propelling India's overall growth.

ET this month looks at Modernizing Road Infrastructure in India. Though the government targets building 30 kms of roads per day, construction in cities has not kept pace with the rapid growth in the urban population. Much has to be achieved under the leadership of Mr. Narendra Modi, and one of the ways to do this is by attracting private sector capital into this space. India Inc. should be working side by side with the government to bolster its inadequate road infrastructure, but instead are hampered by high debt levels and weak balance sheets. All is not grim. The good news is that India is witnessing significant interest from international investors in the infrastructure space.

In **Thinking Aloud**, Jay talks about Indian infrastructure particularly road infrastructure and illumination. Road development has taken a back seat with the changing governance in the country. This has led to faulty road structures and poor lighting, coupled with grim landscaping, among other concerns that continue to hamper urban development.



On the **Podium** this month, we present to you the Managing Director/Country Manager of Valmont India, Mr. Viswanath Devarajan. He discusses the key challenges of road infrastructure development in India, ways to prevent or minimize the damage from road accidents and the ongoing global trends in street lighting infrastructure.

In **We Recommend**, Prasad reviews Adam Grant's bestselling book, 'Give & Take: A Revolutionary Approach to Success'. The author discusses three categories of people: Givers, Takers, and Matchers. Traditionally, Takers are the most successful and the Givers are the doormats. Grant makes a convincing case that successful Givers know how/when to give to Takers so that they do not fail to benefit the right people. Effective networking, collaboration, influence, negotiation and leadership skills are other key highlights of the book. The book is recommended for those looking to structure their relationships, work and business and, in turn, be more successful.

In **Standing Ovation**, we present to you Tamil Nadu based, Indian Association for the Blind (IAB). IAB was established in 1985 under the leadership of Mr. S.M.A. Jinnah despite losing his vision. His dream was to empower the visually impaired through education, independence and self-reliance. Currently, in Tamil Nadu, out of the 30,000 educated and vocationally trained visually challenged people, 20% are being educated, rehabilitated and employed by IAB.

In **Figures of Speech**, Vikram's toon sure knows how to make use of our roads!

As always, we value your opinion, so do let us know how you liked this issue. To visit our previous issues you can visit the Resources section on the website or simply [Click Here](#). You can also follow us on **Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn & Google+** - where you can join our community to continue the dialogue with us! For smartphone and tab users, please [Click here](#) to continue reading Empowering Times.



## Thinking Aloud

### The Missing Pieces That Create Urban Ugliness - Jay

It is no secret that urban India is a mess. While politicians will use the emotive issues connected to rural migration into the city as bargaining chips during elections – blaming them for all ailments of the city - the underlying issues are multiple.

Paeans have been written about the great Charles Correa who passed away this month, and much has appeared in the press recently on his design of Navi Mumbai - planned as a sister city for the expanding metropolis of Mumbai. But, as architects will tell, much distortion happens between their drawing board and the real life execution on the streets. Witness, for instance, the fact that Navi Mumbai currently is not as conceived as earlier by Mr. Correa.

While one can talk of many aspects of this urban mess, today I am limiting myself to two aspects: the road infrastructure and the associated issue of city illumination. On both these aspects the stark reality of lack of systems thinking is visible.

Let's begin with roads. The neglect of road development across the country has been one of the mysteries of State planning. While the legendary Grand Trunk Road (said to have been first built in the Mauryan era – 322 BCE to 185 BCE - and re-built by Sher Shah Suri in the sixteenth century) is a historical landmark that signified the vision of ancient rulers (it extended from Chittagong, Bangladesh, to Kabul, in Afghanistan), such vision was missing over many years of central planning, post-Independence. One of the foremost examples of how highways transform a nation is the work undertaken in the United States in the post-depression years when

a slew of roads were created all across the nation and that network is not only serving the country in good stead even today after decades but also provided multiplier fillip to the economy as a whole.

With National Highways being a central subject, the Union Government could have taken major initiatives but the pace was slow. It was left to Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to give direction in this matter through the Golden Quadrilateral project, initiated in 2001 as part of the National Highways Development Project (NHDP).

While the NHDP work continued, however, it has been widely acknowledged that the foot was taken off the pedal on road development in the past decade. Therefore, the Modi government's arrival was expected to revive stalled projects. True to style, ministerial hyperbole continues with the stated goal of creating 30 kms of roads per day within 2 years – against the current situation of 13 kms per day.

The next bold scheme in the pipeline is the Bharat Mala - an ambitious programme of the Modi government to build a garland of roads along India's west-to-east land border, from Gujarat to Mizoram, at a cost of around Rs 14,000 crores. This would also involve linking it to a road network in coastal states, from Maharashtra to Bengal.

While land acquisition is a favourite excuse for delayed projects, other reasons include muddled government thinking on Public Private Partnership (PPP), the continued flip-flop on toll (should we or not levy it?), etc.

To this list of issues, one must add that apart from building more miles of roads, the poor quality of road work continues to be a major cause of concern, and a primary contributor for road accidents. Be it design failures, or inadequate and faulty maintenance, or a combination of these and other factors, I guess, all are contributory factors. And, to this list we can add the lack of high quality and modern road infrastructure, viz., lack of proper guard rails, inadequate lighting, poor quality of toll stations, lack of service/rest stations with amenities on highways, and many other issues associated with the development of a good, world-class road network. Agreed that such infrastructure comes at a cost, but I believe that a short-sighted, 'penny-wise pound foolish' approach to infrastructure creation is a cause for dismay and we will continue to play catch-up in the development race. Consequently, the true fruits – and multiple benefits of road development – are not secured by such incrementalist thinking.

Street lighting/lamp posts, broken down electrical junction boxes, mangled & de-faced direction boards, flimsy billboards & utility poles, etc. are the other stark reminders to us that design and aesthetics are lost arts to an urban planner in our country. To add to this over the last decade is the thicket of telecom towers across India.

However, there are remedies: design thinking can enable town planners & municipal authorities to insist that these urban eyesores can be tackled by innovative actions. It was pleasing to note in this regard a press report that Reliance Jio 4G towers in certain cities are now being camouflaged as trees to blend with the landscape. Besides improving aesthetics, there are other benefits too. To quote the press report: ' the new structures are also designed to reduce operational costs and lower energy consumption... consumes 40 per cent less electricity, produces 30 per cent less carbon emissions and occupies 60-75 per cent less space.' Indeed such steps have been mandated in some parts of the world, where municipal officials understand that their job is not just to provide functional amenities but also to create a pleasing landscape which contributes to a better quality of life for citizens.

Can our urban planners and town officials also pay heed to the visual elements of the urban landscape. Surely, this is not such a large ask?

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## Podium

### Viswanath Devarajan - Managing Director / Country Manager – Valmont India



Mr. Devarajan holds a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from REC, Surathkal (Now NIT-K) and has more than 30 years of work experience in the Electrical, Automation and Infrastructure industries. Prior to his current role, he has worked in companies such as Vanderlande, SoftDEL, GE and L&T.

**ET: What are the key challenges of road infrastructure development in India?**

**VD:** India's extensive need for road infrastructure is well known. Typically, most of the investments/projects are taken up by the government while the rest by the private sector. In the past 2 years, the Indian government has not been able to undertake the required level of investments amid the difficult business environment which has sapped the enthusiasm of many foreign investors (World Bank, ADB, PE companies like KKR, etc.) who typically fund private sector projects.

Other challenges include:

- Unpredictable regulations;
- Bureaucratic delays in approving projects both at the centre and state levels;
- Endless struggles to secure land rights and the government's stalled attempts at reforms;
- Contractors avoid bidding on less lucrative stretches;
- Political issues in terms of protests on toll roads;
- Contractual anomalies.

**ET: Road accidents in India are a sad & terrible reality. Are there modern structures & mechanism that can be used to prevent or minimize the damage from road accidents?**

**VD:** Key statistics on accidents in India:

- Of the total accidents happening in the country, 15% happen in Tier I & II metro cities;
- Motorized two wheelers comprise 70% of the vehicular movement & contribute to nearly 30% of all fatalities;
- Non-motorized road users such as pedestrians, cyclists and other users contribute a significant 60% of the fatalities;

- 50% of road accidents involve large vehicles such as trucks and buses.

Crash patterns indicate that self-segregation of lanes and the mode of transport used does not ensure safety of the vulnerable lot – pedestrians, cyclists, two wheelers and smaller vehicles. This brings us to the use of barriers. Modern ‘ W’ beam crash barriers are designed to absorb the impact of energy and minimize risks to the occupants and the vehicle. The support/anchoring technology is such that it grounds forces and helps dissipate the energy. Unfortunately, this technology is not implemented widely in India; national highways have introduced such barriers recently in some projects.

**ET: Similarly, Street lighting poles in India are generally considered ugly eyesores. What are some of the global trends with regard to street lighting infrastructure?**

**VD:** India is a developing country. However, most roads and streets do not have lighting. In the past several years, providing street lighting on the roads is an activity taken up as an exercise just before the elections as if it can project the candidates in a better light! So features such as quality, durability and aesthetics are totally missed out.

Globally, street lighting is considered as a part of street furniture which means that all the fittings provided on the road are coordinated to give a unique character to the road or the street. These include street light poles, traffic structures, fire hydrants, signages, gantries, post boxes, bollard, etc.

Specifically, street light poles are used to give a designed look to the street. In India, Valmont demonstrated this to a great deal at Vittal Mallya road in Bangalore. We provided designer poles (imported from France), and in a way, this street is a tourist attraction in Bangalore.

Global trends include the use of smart galvanized and painted poles with designer brackets. Pedestals and brass or antique finish look for poles are used at heritage districts.

There are a huge variety of structures and matching luminaries offered by lighting companies but the municipalities and road authorities need to apply a bit of thought to bring some character to cityscapes with almost the same level of spending.

**ET: As a veteran in the manufacturing sector in India, what are your views on the ‘ Make in India’ initiative of the government?**

**VD:** The Make in India campaign would be a successful initiative if there are other supporting actions/policies put in place simultaneously, which may include:

- As a manufacturing company and providing products for exports, one of the biggest issues has been to move some of our larger structures by road to the nearest port. Road & Port infrastructure need serious upgrading;
- While we want companies to ‘ Make in India’ we have a huge dearth in skilled technical tradesman, i.e., fitters, welders, electricians, etc.
- The Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) are no longer an attractive option for the youth who may be happy working as handlers in a shopping mall. This gap in the supply of tradesman needs to be addressed;
- While the Make in India initiative addresses the single window clearance and issuing of licenses, the real problem is in the annual renewals and approvals. There is a huge problem in this area in terms of integrity and competency on these annual assessments & the corresponding recommendations.

There are several other aspects to ensure that the Make in India initiative is successful and hopefully some thought will go into

sustaining this initiative.

**ET: Can you please share more about your company, Valmont Industries?**

**VD:** Valmont Industries began in 1946, in USA and is an international leader in engineered products and services for infrastructure and water-conserving irrigation equipment for agriculture. Valmont Industries operates in four primary business segments: Engineered Infrastructure Products, Utility Support Structures, Irrigation and Coatings as well as in the tubing, grinding media and electrolytic manganese dioxide businesses. Valmont (VMI) is publicly traded on the New York Stock Exchange. We focus on two global markets: infrastructure and agriculture. Valmont Industries is present in 23 developed and developing countries, offering 27 brands from more than 90 facilities.

Valmont has been supplying poles and structures to India since the early 2000s. The success of Valmont's international facilities in increasing the Indian customer base led to the establishment of a world class manufacturing plant at the Indapur Industrial Estate, near Pune, Maharashtra, in 2011.

Valmont India manufactures and supplies quality support structures of an international standard to customers based in India and overseas. The products designed and manufactured at the Indapur Industrial Estate include:

- Street Lighting Poles
- High Mast Systems
- Sports Lighting Poles
- Utility Transmission Poles
- Utility Distribution Poles
- Utility Substation Structures
- Telecommunication Monopoles

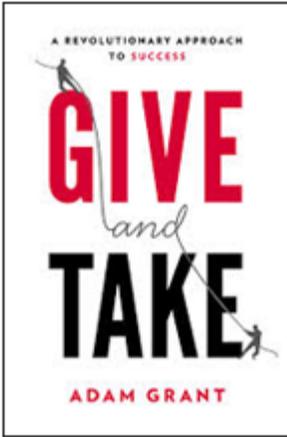
As a member of the Valmont global family, Valmont India is dedicated to the same company-wide values: passion for quality, excellence, integrity and positive results. Valmont India is currently planning to introduce a variety of new products such as quality international gratings and highway side bars into its manufacturing range.

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## **We Recommend**

**Give and Take: A Revolutionary Approach to Success - Adam Grant**



This is a book that is optimistic and a refreshing change with its central message that ‘ nice guys do not necessarily end last’, that it is not just ok to be nice, generous and giving but these qualities actually will help one to really succeed.

So different from ‘ it’s dog eat dog world’, ‘ eat or be eaten’, ‘ in the end it’s everyman for himself’; ‘ being nice is naïve and can cost you your career’, implicit messages that we receive, which shape the way we treat other people and help perpetuate a cycle of toxic behavior because it’s a jungle out there and you don’t have a choice.

But we do have a choice and Adam Grant, presents that choice in a very lucid way.

Grant, an organizational psychologist, puts us all in three broad categories Takers, Matchers and Givers. Through a number of insightful and interesting examples he explains clearly and through anecdotal evidence illustrates how the assumption that me-first Takers always reach the top of the ladder is wrong.

Through convincing examples, like of George Meyer of the Simpsons fame, who took credit for only 12 episodes of this fantastically successful series out of 300 episodes which he helped script, Grant explains that life is not a zero sum game and the secret to giving successfully is to simply to ‘ give more’. Or take the case of Adam Rifkin, a shy introverted programmer, who was voted the most networked person by LinkedIn, simply because his selfless contribution to hundreds of start-ups and entrepreneurs in the valley. And, there is yet another example of Kenneth Lay who was a fake Giver and in the end his network deserted him when he needed it the most.

These are not ‘ saints’ or people driven only by altruism. These are nice people who by continuing to be nice people, discovered a practical and sustainable approach to success, that in the end helped them as much or more.

Adam also describes how CEOs who are Takers and masquerading as Givers can be identified by their posts on social media, the way they take all the credit and pay themselves far more than the norm. Boards can now spot this behavior and save their companies from these CEOs.

Adam also offers practical advice to avoid the traps of giving too much of themselves to the detriment of their own work and can avoid turning into ‘ doormats’ by dodging the traps of being too trusting, too empathetic or too timid. Grant shows how to balance the benefits to themselves and others. Is giving risky? Yes, but only if you think in the short term, invariably if you want to stay in the course, the fruits of giving will multiply and can work for you in the most unseen ways.

According to the Financial Times where this book had a rave review - ‘ Academia is hung up about whether givers are motivated by self-interest or are truly altruistic. Grant, the youngest tenured professor at Wharton Business School, sweeps away this debate: it is the consequences that are important, not the causes’. While many of us may say, this is not new. The Bhagvad Gita propounds the same message but the fact remains, are we practicing giving or are we too afraid of the apparent risks of being nice?

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## Standing Ovation

### The Indian Association for Blind (IAB), Tamil Nadu



Indian Association for the Blind

Located in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, IAB began operations in 1985, spearheaded by Mr. S.M.A. Jinnah, a visually challenged activist. Since then, IAB has been empowering the visually challenged towards self-reliance through various initiatives. What began with 4 students then today stands as a guidance centre for the visually challenged.

IAB helps the visually challenged through education; in June 1992, the Association took its first step by setting up the IAB Higher Secondary School and today stands as the only co-educational higher secondary school of its kind in Tamil Nadu, with well-equipped classrooms, smart computer labs and libraries. The inception of the Integrated Education Program in 1985 has enabled around 100 IAB students to pursue undergraduate and post graduate education in mainstream colleges in and around Madurai, annually.

To foster the overall growth of its students, IAB established a well-equipped Braille and Audio Library in 1995. The Association also established, in 1999, the Braille book production house which makes all printed materials accessible in Braille format. The Association also offers extra-curricular activities such as sports, yoga, karate, music, dramatics and literary clubs.

Working towards self-sufficiency, IAB gives importance to career and skill based training including computer, BPO training and basic engineering skills. Some of IAB's support services include developing life skills such as social habits and manners, cooking, home assistance and group living, orientation and mobility and recreational activities. Its legal advice services, which was initiated in 2013, provides various legal entitlements for persons with disabilities, and with the assistance of well-known lawyers from the Madurai's High Court Bench, these services are expected to reach 50 people with disabilities every year.

The Association has many awards to the honourable work that it does for the visually challenged. For more information, please visit <http://www.theiab.org>.

For IAB's noble cause, it deserves a Standing Ovation!

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