

## **Jugaadneeti': Revolutionizing the Indian Way of Living**

15th of September' 2000, the summer Olympics opening ceremony is happening in Sydney, Australia, ace sprinter Cathy Freeman is about to lighten up the flame in the cauldron within a circle of fire. My family and I are witnessing the breathtaking spectacle on television and marveling at the way the pastoral heritage of Australia is being celebrated in the cultural performances. Suddenly someone came up with analogies as to what will be the scenario had it been happening in India. Points shoot across, most of them about how flawed the whole thing will be. How something or the other won't work and how at the end of it all, we will put up a great performance with our ingenious makeshift arrangements we lovingly refer to as 'jugaad'. I was ten at that time and since have tried to learn and observe more about the relevance of the so called jugaadism in India and how does it impact our daily lives.

Picture yourself in a train compartment and having discussion with your co-passengers. Nine out of ten times the discussion would be related to the prevalent political system and administrative procedures and how bad they are. We all are so very certain that India is a very lamentable country and that change and progress are concepts which will hardly come to reality in our country ever. My question here is that if it is so; then how come we are one of the fastest emerging super-economies in the world. Why it is that everybody is looking up to India and cherishing the prospective rise of hers. There must be some strong reasons for that, since a nation as huge as ours just can't ride on the hype alone without any substance. A normal stroll through any place in the country will give you the answer, be it a tier two city like Allahabad or a huge metropolis like Mumbai, it's engraved everywhere. And that answer is jugaad! I'll substantiate it a bit. I happened to visit a small village called Mandaikarai inside the Mudumallai Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu. Now here there is a big problem of elephants and other wild animals coming over and destroying the farms of the common folks. How do they solve it? They use the principles of echo, reaction synopsis and explosion to devise a simple looking sound bomb system. The wires parameterize the farm and as soon as they are touched give rise to a big sound explosion. Who devised it all? A simple farmer with no education let aside the technical knowhow of such a system. To this day, I am still in awe of such a brilliant

methodology. How many times have you seen intelligent cost effective solutions to grave problems being invented by normal people of our country who don't even bother or know whether they are using the high-tech principles theorized by some great inventor or not? It's inbuilt amongst us. We are the best resource optimizers in the whole world! Right from our childhood, we are given certain restraints and told, although in a very subtle way, to work our way through it and we do it amazingly well. Innovation thus happens and, when it is given proper investment and the resources it needs, it works wonders. One of the foundation reasons for the massive growth of the IT sector in India and the American instilled brain drain was this only, our amazing innovation capabilities and its large attraction towards the required resources. Entrepreneurship however is a little different from just being constraints developed. It is creation of something and creativity doesn't follow any constraint orders. Moreover we as a society do not encourage risking out in pursuit of our goals. If one succeeds we are all praises for him/her but if, by chance, the person don't we go all out in bulldozing him/her over and labeling him/her as per our wishes without even caring for knowing the truth. This has been a societal perception and for sure isn't going to change overnight. We believe in stabilizing more than what is necessary rather than in rapid expansions and this is one of the major reasons why we took so long to take off in our flight to greatness. That said, it is in India only, that a person like Dhirubhai Ambani, who was uneducated, capital-less and with no backing at all, went on to create a dream empire like Reliance Industries, which is in itself a role model for organizations, the world over. What is of immense importance here is not only the ingenuity of Dhirubhai but the risk taking ability of all those people, a sizeable number to say the least, who invested in his dream and company making it what it is today. From 'Paan' shops in the corner of street with awesome marketing techniques like that of personalized customer interactions for better sales to a cobbler on the road in front of my hostel having low height stools for better customer service, we have more than a billion entrepreneurs in our nation.

What is missing though is a platform for the people. We have magnanimous potential, so much so that anything said about is an understatement in itself but how do we unleash it? Education system isn't what I think would be the major differentiator here. It's my personal belief that innovation and entrepreneurship cannot be taught, it comes from

within. What we can do though is to create an arena where ideas are respected and encouraged so what if they seem very weird and infeasible, so was flying once; where the society lets people to come back to normal after running an unsuccessful venture, there are legends of top notch business schools, like Stanford, preferring one time failed entrepreneurs; and finally where the government and the society hand in hand actively participate in the process of change for the unprivileged masses, as is said “Teach a man fishing and you have fed him for life.” We need to believe in our supremacy. We were once referred to as the ‘Golden Bird’ and nobody took that title away but our own selves. We are rightly termed as the sleeping giants and it’s time to sound the alarm clocks. It’s not going to happen overnight but for sure a few radical moves will initialize and as well accelerate the whole process.

We have a revolution in the making and revolutions just don’t get started on nothing. We have to have those germinating seeds for it. Seeds of a multi faceted approach which will engulf a whole nation letting it know in a subtle manner that the time has come for laying claim and exhibiting its greatness. One of the seeds has to be the outreach to the nation something similar to a war cry. College level entrepreneurial cells (e-cells) can play a big role here. If out of the thousands of colleges in India, students form a movement of entrepreneurship and start ideating, discussing and debating amongst themselves lots can happen. I am personal experience holder of this fact and in my e-cell we have ideating sessions at a very frequent pace which have resulted in at least ten successful student company ventures from my college and innumerable ideas generation. Moreover specific purpose oriented projects which the e-cells undertake help develops and expands many a horizons. Not only college campaigns but campaigns by the corporate serve a big boost up for the creation of buzz. Examples of this are the ‘Jaago Re’ campaign of ‘Tata Tea’ which helped create a lot of buzz or say something like ‘Lead India’ of ‘The Times of India’ group leading to people thinking, though at a very miniscule level but for sure thinking. Another aspect is the inspirational buzz it generates amongst others. I see a student like my own self doing something great which I also aspire to, next time I’ll also do it and in turn create a larger buzz. Competitions come into picture just because of this. It is human nature to compare him/her with others and a competitive feeling thus generates. Now if a competition about some positive aspect comes over and say fifty

participate in it, at least ten will come out changed in some sense or the other thus contributing to the buzz. Once a buzz is generated it will magnify more and more and soon we will have something worth reckoning to and appreciating.

A major factor is the rural initiatives. All said and done about showcasing and utilizing the Indian jugaad, nothing substantial can happen unless the scheme incorporates rural indigenous efforts and make them business intelligent. When the statistics say something like 70% of people live in rural India, it points out to a big harsh reality as well; we aren't the only one to have a say in the overall generalized matters of India, a thing most of us take for granted. I even at times feel that all the people claiming about the life changing patterns now happening in the metros where shopping has taken a massive upswing aren't actually aware of living in the real India. They assume a small non representative part to be the general situation which is as distant from truth as anything can be. We have had great products from the rural initiatives like vermin compost and Haathichap papers and there is no reason to believe that rural India cannot produce international quality standards product, after all we have quality and ideas infused in our blood through the 'jugaadneeti'.

Finally we have to have role models which I believe haven't been well showcased till now. Fortunately we have them in our brilliant business leaders who are flagging global forts now, impeccable ideating minds winning accolades everywhere and a few good politicians responsible for the overall growth of the country. We need to disseminate the information to the masses relating to the surge in nation building and the contribution of the role models in it. The best way for making anyone an active participant is by letting him learn and try out things by self actions and doing. We generally idolize people whom we can relate to and if our role models spend even a very small time with us it works like magic. The idea is to let the people see their heroes and let them tread a path similar to their heroes yet unique as per their own personal choices and commitments. Phenomenon like social entrepreneurship will then bore fruit letting people earn as well as create a long lasting positive change in their surroundings. It is my personal belief that if we have able social entrepreneurs, in say every ten villages, they can revolutionize a whole generation of people.

We have unlimited potential and our Indian way of living is already well developed talking in terms of innovation and entrepreneurship. It's just for the people to realize their own true worth and do something constructive about it. Creating buzz, letting everyone be a part of it, making students as the facilitators of a grand movement, focusing on the core objectives and people, having able and inspiring role models and creating a conducive environment for the growth of ideas are just of the some ways to tune in the alarm clock for the sleeping giant. If a few years down the line, after witnessing a magnificent performance by some other nation, a ten year old drives through the belief that we, India, could have done it better, I would be happily saying that we have actually done well. To quote Victor Hugo, for a statement very referred to by the Prime Minister Shri Manmohan Singh, "Nobody can stop an idea whose time has come!" I guess this idea's time is long pending. Let's get our Jugaadneeti where it actually belongs.