



As I attempt to pen my reflections of, and not chronicle on, 2016, two words over occupy my thoughts – Thank You & Post Truth – more on these later but first;

Looking at the trends beyond 2016, I am more bullish and more optimistic than ever that inspite of tons of turmoil around, tomorrow shall be better for all of us. Collectively, we are aware of the dangers & risks that our actions, or lack thereof, are resulting into and consciously attempting to mitigate, howsoever slowly; notwithstanding Trump's tweet on Nuclear Weapons and Tillerson becoming Secretary of State. Technological supernova synchronising with ever increasing, even if challenging, opportunities makes me envious of the millennial generation as they would be witnessing to, contributing in and enjoying the historical & defining moments never experienced by any generation so far. The people are connecting and collaborating with each other better, faster and cheaper thus creating ever expanding, open source, crowd managed and virtually free platforms of global wisdom, curiosity and choices. Much as we like to bash millennials as an entitled generation, this generation is the most diverse, inclusive, educated (62%), healthiest & wealthiest (10 in Forbes Richest List) ever – they are more, mostly better, informed and focussed on their life goals and are better prepared as well as willing to slog their way.

If anything, 2016 has been a year that continues to surprise the surprise unsurprisingly. I just could not have imagined terrorists getting multiple entry schengen visas and expanding the theatre of action beyond South Asia, Middle East & Africa to include France, Germany & Belgium as well. And I am not including state sponsored or rebellion attacks that are more of order than exception in places like Turkey and Syria and Russia and Iraq and Nigeria and Egypt and, and, and...

If Brexit has surprised Britons more than the rest of the world, so has the 2016 Presidential Election left Americans more perplexed than they, or the world, were prepared for. Populism has already cost David Cameron & Matteo Renzi their position and left Park Geun-hye & Dilma Rousseff nursing their impeachment wounds. Current geopolitical (dis)order reminds me of Leonard Cohen, whose departure from earth we mourn and songs we continue to cherish:

*“Everybody knows that the boat is leaking, everybody knows that the captain lied.
Everybody got this broken feeling, like their father or their dog just died.”*

Closer home – Demonetisation / Remonetisation debate has polarised politicians & economists like never before, Najeeb Jung outsmarted Arvind Kejriwal and Pradip Baijal got reward of alignment of faith, Sheila Dixit ditched by Congress, Akhilesh & Shivpal continue to sledge each other, with former succeeding in engineering his own expulsion by none other than his own father (PS: MSY obliged Akhilesh but revoked within hours, proving blood being thicker than water) & Suresh Kalamadi relinquishing IOA patron position while Chautala still clinching to the same, surprise is in for surprise. Indian girls outshined in Rio while ugly Americanness of Ryan Lochte was at its best / worst display and Ingrid Oliveira made avoidable headlines. While Mistry tried, albeit unsuccessfully so far, redefining Trust, Tata paid back in his attempt to rewrite dignity – expensive, ugly & dirty linen being washed in & by public. I always believed in the possibilities but looking at the recent events, I am more than convinced of “anything is possible, possibly sooner than one would expect & possibility exponentially increases if the outcome has negative consequences.”



If surgical strike was a befitting response to Pathankot & Uri, Nagrota was a brutal reminder of the fragile world we live in where complacency is the biggest threat and could (read: does) have fatal consequences. A police officer assassinating a diplomat makes me wonder how quickly we have gone back to '84 (Indira Gandhi assassination) and how resilient / reconciled the world has become (thankfully) and did not reverse to 1919 and sparked another WW (Assassination of Franz Ferdinand is attributed to be the ignition of WWI).

In an year of exits (Amexit for Hillary Clinton, Brexit for David Cameron, Cyexit for Cyrus Mistry, Dexit for Dilma Rousseff, Jexit for J. Jayalalithaa, Pexit for Park GH, Rexit for Raghuram Rajan; the alphabet is far from complete but continuing), 2016 can also be termed as an year when Disruption was personified, be it the rise of right in global geopolitics (While Britain – let's call it so as long as it exists so – might have lead in anything after more than couple of centuries, entire Europe is queuing to prove them right – be it Marine in France, Akesson in Sweden, Wilders in Netherlands, Frauke in Germany or Dawn in Greece), Demonetisation in India (no comments as I wait to hear NaMo this evening), Concentration of Wealth (World's richest made \$237B – as in billion – this year as per a Bloomberg report; only 21 countries in the world have GDP more than that of 10 richest persons as per Forbes, and Bill Gates has more money than the combined GDP of 41 countries with a total population of 52 million) or Kremlin's alleged entry (& welcome) into White House. Business philosophy of everyone competing with everyone and everything (Boeing competing with Cisco who partners with Diageo and compete with Nestle to beat Amul and the list is limited by vision & imagination only) is now applicable in all spheres of interconnected interdependent instant world where Average is officially over and privacy is dead & buried (Courtesy Tom Friedman). If you care to listen to Bill Taylor, being best in what you do is not enough, you have to be the only one doing what you do and you do not survive in current times – you either thrive or are dead & forgotten – except in the case of studies explaining students of what & how not to do (this one comes from yours truly).

One of my long held belief of “Nothing but & beyond truth reigns” has also been challenged this year by a phrase called “post truth” and as I struggle to understand its meaning or definition, Oxford Dictionaries have named it as “word of the year” – whatever it might mean. With the advent & proliferation of social media, everybody is a journalist, blogger, editor, opinion maker or spoiler or influencer – depending upon which side of the coin you find yourself and the results are almost instantaneous & brutal – on your face. Pundits face-palmed post Brexit & double face-palmed post US Election and are still running for covers in India post Demonetisation and are actually scared to predict / forecast anything on NaMo's address scheduled in the next hour. In times of uncertainty & volatility, which is a new normal (though not the “new normal” as defined by Arun Jaitley), truth is dead, facts are passé and opinions are influenced by emotions & personal beliefs. When truth is complicated, post truth reigns and pity it may be, brutal reality it is. In the age of trolls, a troll writes a book on troll and she is trolled by the trolls, in the end – rather beginning as the book was launched earlier this week – there is no room for facts, facts do not matter and one has to choose a side. Neutrality is not an option anymore.

How does one cope with such turmoil, particularly those in responsible positions or public domain? My long held belief that “we live in a 24x7 scrutiny, that is brutal, unforgiving & unforgetting, where anything you ever said, wrote, or even thought, is out forever & shall be used against you at the



most (mis)opportune moment against you” is only getting reinforced – be it Trumps female or Clinton’ email. Given that the situation is not going to get better anytime soon and reconciling with this “new” reality, all of us would do better by taking few lessons from Hollywood / Bollywood where actors sleep in their bedrooms with make-up on. Figuratively talking, we must always be guarded in our actions / lack thereof, thoughts / opinions / stands / points of view on anything and everything, even those that, on the face, do not appear to be remotely connected with our immediate spheres, including naming your kid (ask Saifeena) because all of us are being watched / observed by everybody who care to or chose to do so. Even God was not forgiving when he called Fidel Castro back immediately after Americans elected Donald Trump, just to prove him right.

On the last, but perhaps the most important reflection, “Thank You”. May be, rather largely, due to age, I am becoming more and more thankful for everything and everybody around me. When your cardiologist & physician tell you just to moderate, inspite of your stressing and stretching your body that has celebrated golden jubilee on this planet, you just can’t thank enough to your Parents, God, Family & Friends. When I move to different parts of the world and society, I continue to wonder how could and why should I be so lucky to be blessed with so much that is not only far more than I deserve but far far more than I ever desired. When I pause, which I attempt to do more often now, I believe this is one resolution every person should undertake and this is one virtue everybody should nurture. Since I am disproportionately benefitted, here is why I believe it is important: It makes me humble, humility keeps my curiosity (childlike I believe but childish others see) alive and my desire (though I wish it graduates to something more meaningful like commitment) to learn more. The more I read, the more I crave. The more I ask, the more I get. The more I get, the more I find is there to get (did someone say “greed”?) and a selfish soul that I am, I just don’t / can’t give enough to those who need it more than me – may be my incompetence disguised under greed. My unsolicited, perhaps unwarranted, and may be useless advice: Be generous. It pays to be self-aware & self-confident simultaneously and one of the numerous keys to survival in this world is to have a microscope on one eye & a telescope on the other without having a headache. You have to be good at a sprint as well as a marathon; long term values need not be compromised to achieve short term goals. I am more focused now on leaving rather than creating impressions and thank all my mentors, and adversaries, who challenged and helped me achieve far more than I am capable of. I have learned, though the hard way, that “why you do” is far more important that “what you do” (Start with Why – Simon Sinek) and in the sustainable term it pays in multiples if you graduate your attitude from Entitlement to Contribution (John Doerr).

We are blessed to be living in interesting times that are full of chaos and disorder and it would be a cardinal sin not to make most of it, so let’s reach out to those who may be too sacred or marginalised to seek help and make positive contributions that all of us are quite capable of. If Demonetisation is disruption, there are lessons therein as well (Perhaps Government of India have mastered Lean Startup Concepts (Eric Ries) of failing early – 65 notifications since November 8th and counting). If Aleppo is a tragedy and collective shame on humanity, it proves how much more we have to do and how fast it has to be done and how easily it can be done – all it takes is being sincere to oneself, individually & collectively. If earthquakes are inevitable, humanitarian relief need not be hostage to the opinion / belief / faith of the victims.

simplifying sustainable success...



I like to end this rather long note with the belief I started with: 2017 shall be a better year than 2016 (even hotter), there shall be volatility & uncertainty of unprecedented consequences but collectively we shall overcome – *schau mer mal* – all we need is to keep our conscience alive and this is what we owe to ourselves, not to next generations.

So, keep enjoying, spread happiness, stay healthy & hopeful. As I put my proverbial pen for this message down, NaMo just said: Let's start the New Year with Determination. For me, it is determination to do all the positive that we can, and determination to avoid all the negative that we must – let evil NOT prevail because good men silently watch (*The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing – Edmund Burke*). Determination to spread smile & not hatred, determination to include & not exclude, determination to encourage pluralism because we live in pluralistic societies and determination to face kids with our eyes beaming with confidence that we did all we could and beyond – and their eyes beaming with comfort and appreciation.

Let do all this and more, because it makes sense.

Cheers