

Make things simple to happen

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We IRSME officials have to work to make things simple to happen at least in our own domain of activities, without bothering about others. If we cannot solve a problem, let us avoid becoming a problem ourselves. This message will become more relevant after reading my thoughts on this issue, which I believe can solve the basic issue of non-deliverance, which this country is faced with.

I often wonder, where did we go wrong in the last fifty odd years. Why despite a stable democratic system inherited after centuries of foreign rule and oppression, Bharatvarsh did not really take off? Why, on the economic front we are still at the bottom of the list of nations. Why even basic infrastructure like decent roads and highways were non-existent till now, and it required an “Atal” resolve to start building them at a pace unimaginable, only a couple of years earlier. How is it that every Bharatvasi who leaves our shores becomes a success story, despite being an abysmal failure in his own motherland? Why, Why, Why, Why and Why. These Why’s, I think will haunt me to my grave.

Yes we all have to start questioning and start asking why? **Isn’t it ridiculous that in the system we live in, a procedure or a rule or a policy is easily and almost always allowed to take overriding priority over deliverance? Isn’t it equally ridiculous that the same system lays such a strong premium on non-deliverance that at times the achievers stand the risk of being victimized.** And in the process, deliverance suffers and has suffered in the first fifty years of the existence of a free Bharatvarsh, till the Atal resolve came about. I hope that we as individuals, as a society and as a nation would now start giving deliverance its overdue recognition.

My first visit to the developed west, was to Germany in 1991 where I thought, I unraveled the secret of deliverance. During visits to German locomotive builders whose productivity was fifty times ours, I understood why the purchasing power of an average German was as many times that of a Bharatvasi. And this ratio of fifty was not due to just technology. The major factor was an enthused human being who delivered for the eight hours he worked as opposed to remaining or appearing busy for eight hours. **The crux is delivery, not deliberation and the sooner we understand this as an individual, as a society and as a nation, the better.** Expressed differently, the sum total of the produce of a society is exactly equal to the sum total of what every single individual in the society gets out of it. If we produce a lemon, we will get a lemon. After this visit, I started to appreciate better the meaning and also the relevance of the Gross Domestic Product and could relate it to my capacity to purchase even household items of everyday necessity.

The legendary parliamentarian Piloo Mody once posed the following question to Mrs Gandhi, the then Prime Minister – “Madam how is that every Bharatvasi is able to perform exceedingly well under any Government other than his own”.

Over two decades of serving in the sarkari sector has left me thoroughly confused. In the hallowed sector, one is generally assessed by how busy he remains, how rule and procedure oriented he is and how subservient he is. How productive one is, generally remains immaterial unless it is to be twisted and used against him. Procedure orientation is welcome but output orientation is considered an unacceptable trait, and delivery, if at all it happens is always looked at with suspicion. Cutting across official buildings spread all over the country, one comes across a sea of babus, who appear busy but have no interest whatsoever in delivery and are therefore not delivering. And if deliverance happens, it is more by chance, less by choice. And so we have become a rashtra of non-achievers. A rashtra where anything happening is considered an achievement and so one has all the foundation and inaugural stone ceremonies galore for things, which should have been there as a matter of course.

“Make things simple to happen” and then things will happen. Things will happen at the hands of even the so-called average and mediocre and then the country would have no option other than taking off for the big league. Unfortunately the primitive feudal mindset still continues. During the British rule we were slaves, and the system was accordingly designed to make untrustworthy slaves work. Why we are still carrying on with the same system is what I am unable to fathom. The same old system, which required a hundred thumb impressions for a job as trivial as even buying a spoon, continues. The same old system where everyone is considered unworthy of trust and you have to have a countersignature over the signature of every responsible person continues. Somehow we have ended up believing in and therefore practicing “Make things impossible to happen” as the solution to all ills including the all-pervasive corruption. I quite often wonder why we don’t make it easy to do things. Why even simple matters spin out of control requiring phenomenal effort to execute? Why things happen so easily in the developed and even the developing countries and never happen in our motherland? Why our motherland even after fifty years of independence is still grappling with primary issues like water, electricity and housing? Why we can make one rocket and one atom bomb beautifully and fail in mass quality production of even petty items? Why projects initiated with great fanfare are found rotting only after a couple of months? All this, I feel is because we have made doing anything impossible. I really dream that the country would one day adopt the philosophy of “Make things simple to happen”.

If even buying a spoon is a project, how will factories and powerhouses get built? And surely they are not getting built at the rate India warrants. As a first step let us de-complicate the over complex decision making process. And I am not talking only about the big decisions. Even petty decisions at the field level also require being de-complicated. Let us reduce the number of thumb impressions per decision. Let us if possible eliminate or drastically reduce files. This will radically improve productivity, fix accountability and in the process eliminate corruption. Everyone will then be fully accountable for his or her acts of omission or commission and will either pay the price for non-deliverance or enjoy the fruits of achievement besides standing the risk of immediate exposure for acts of impropriety. Another step is to de-complicate the complex mechanism of contracting. Our contractual procedures are so harrowing that ultimately one ends up purchasing poor quality products and services at unreasonable and quite often unworkable prices, and also

in the process creating ample opportunities for loot. **Let us for once accept that our decision-making processes and the contractual mechanisms have failed the country and therefore deserve to be overhauled.**

And thirdly let us start treating adult as adults. Let us start delegating matters and powers without the fear of things going wrong. I recently read “Maverick” by Ricardo Semmler. It tells us about a multi billion dollar organization, which has no policies, no rulebooks and believes in absolute delegation. The employees decide their own wage, decide their timings of work, take decisions about production and create their own working environment. Executives who sit with their feet on the tables, but solve problems when they come are appreciated and officials bogged down with files and work are not tolerated. And instead of bringing about a chaos, which we Indians believe such a system shall, the Semmler organization is growing at a mind boggling growth rate, besides being rated as a model organization in Brazil.

If structured and complicated decision making systems, strong procedure oriented budgeting systems, elaborate vigilance setups and a over bearing bureaucracy has brought the country to the present situation, I think we would be much better off without them. Let us make things simple to happen and then they will happen.