



Another year gone by and I just can't thank my friends, well-wishers & God enough for their support, encouragement, well-meaning wishes and His kindness for making me who I am – all the more so as I enter my golden jubilee year on this planet. I extend heartfelt gratitude to everyone who believed in me and MORE to those who criticize and ridicule me – for they encourage me to raise my bar. I am privileged to be physically fit, mentally sharp (*or so I would like to believe*) and live in a world where I can express myself with little care about the "intolerance".

As I recap 2015, my attempt is to mentally timeshift myself and narrate the incidents that have left impressions on my mind, without taking the advantage of hindsight. In doing so, it is quite likely and natural that some events and their descriptions might look flawed due to related after events and I express my regret for the same. Also, this time I shall try to reflect on the events that might not have remained headlines for long, but created lasting effects on things to come. Lastly, there is no order of priority and chronology and, once again, my apologies for that.

This year has seen more positives than quite a few preceding ones. The global economy is in much better shape – not sure whether inspite of or because of much awaited FED hike. Yes, China is slowing down and commodities, led by oil, are tanking but for the world as a whole, this could not have happened at a more opportune moment. Texas & Riyadh may not like oil @\$35 but Tokyo, Seoul & Delhi do not mind the party to continue for a while, which is quite likely. Silicon Valley is multiplying globally, at least in spirits of frugality, speed of decision making and simplification strategies to solve some of the gravest problems the world is facing and Start Up has become perhaps most global word in business parlance this year. With more than \$100 billion flowing into this segment, it offers a great promise not only for research but also for employment, globally. I am consciously aware that this would be unfair but just cannot resist to praise Ubers & AirBnBs who are continuously, continually, brutally, vigorously and fearlessly writing the rules of the businesses and challenging the very paradigm of the wor(l)d business. I sincerely pray for the momentum to succeed and spread beyond Guangzhou, Tel Aviv, Berlin & Bengaluru to Bath, Kano,

Chittagong and places yet not marked on the global map for business. Consolidation appears to be the name of the game with few big tickets deals like Halliburton – Baker Hughes, GE – ALSTOM, DOW – DuPont and numerous not so big but still significant like Twitter – Periscope, Dropbox – Clementine & CloudOn (9M users, 30 people team & \$100M valuation), Infosys – Panaya for \$200M, EMC – Virtustream for \$1.2 B and several others.

While scandals like Volkswagen leave us with a feeling of being cheated, I believe, and hope as well as sincerely wish, that world is more ethical and responsible now than ever before else Blatter & Platini would not have faced the ban & Srinivasan would still have been running cricket. I prefer Musk's (alongwith his friends) commitment of \$1B for research on Artificial intelligence and Google (Sorry, ALPHABET) focus on driverless cars more than Zuckerberg donating huge sum to charity while still advocating for Free Basics. We may, and rightfully so, debate whether China should build strategically important new islands in South China Sea, that we are also discussing disappearance of Carterlet in New Papua Guinea, appreciating the creation of world's first zero carbon & zero waste city MASDAR (Abu Dhabi, UAE) and reaching proverbial historical deal at COP21 are healthy signs per se. Given that odd / even policy of Delhi government is more odd than even in its given format, flawed in absence of supporting measures in place and has instantly created cheating industry on manipulating number plates, the fact that pollution is being debated in India itself refreshes the air a bit. Global circumnavigation of Solar Powered aircraft and Iranian Nuclear Deal make me believe that we are now more prepared to think, act and behave responsibly and I welcome these changes wholeheartedly.

Politically also, positives far outweigh the inevitable negatives. Aung San Suu Kyi brought hope where there was none, Nepal got her new constitution – inspite or because of Madhis – and Muhammadu Buhari has so far been far more firm on Boko Haram than his predecessor(s). Closer home, Arvind Kejriwal has concurred invincible Modi and Nitish just demonstrated the power of arithmetic in class, caste and creed dominated politics we continue to call democracy. As Fawzia Koofi, the first woman MP in Afghanistan, aspires to be the first female president of the country amidst several and severe threats to her life by Taliban, Angela Merkel becomes the person of the year more for her astute leadership demonstrated by managing European Crisis, that tends to become perennial and perpetual, and refugee affairs than local politics at home and Saudi women did actually vote this year even if they can still not drive. Though isolated and physically far off, incidents and persons like these offer more hopes on gender equality than all the talks that go on and on and on at several forums. That inspite of his comment on Hillary, Muslims & a TV Anchor, Trump continue to enjoy lead in US is, at least in my limited wisdom and little understanding, an indicator of how much a common American (and it is quite true globally as well) is fed up of full time politicians and prefer a CEO to lead their country even if he is someone called Donald Trump and while I may have reservation on the person or personality, not that it matters at all, his track record of successfully running the empire and delivering results consistently cannot be questioned. On home front, NaMo hit a local & global masterstrokes first by inviting POTUS for Republic day & last (so far, as I am still keeping my fingers crossed on what he might end his year with his last rally in Noida this afternoon) by dropping at Lahore in his trademark style silencing his worst critiques for some time at least and states have started competing, healthily so far, for the investments, be it saffron led Rajasthan, or street led West Bengal or socialist UP (and I am intentionally not mentioning Gujarat, Odisha & Bihar here) and this is a welcome sign for the business. Notwithstanding Maggie controversy, beef ban and debates on intolerance, business climate in the country is better now than it ever was in recent memory (arguably

could and should have been far more healthy) and finally “Make in India”, “Digital India”, “Start Up India – Stand Up India” are getting translated into action, albeit slowly but surely.

Quite early in the year, terrorist attacks on Charlie Hebdo put the world in shock and awe as we could not have imagined it happening in a place called Paris, the most global city in France and one of the few truly cosmopolitan place in entire Europe. How wrong were all of us was terribly demonstrated by the same elements before the year could end by engineering multiple and more brutal attacks in Paris itself, this time virtually challenging the global powers that be, forcing Hollande to declare emergency in France for the first time since the World war II and, for a change, bringing US of A & Russia on a common platform in fight against terrorism. It, however, remain a pity that Paris events overshadowed other equally brutal, if not more, attacks over less privileged persons elsewhere, be it Egypt, or Beirut or Copenhagen or Ankara or Tunisia or Mali or Bangkok or Mardan (Pakistan) and this is, by no mean exhaustive. While terrorist attacks are condemnable irrespective of place or number of casualties inflicted or the group claiming responsibilities, this is not the reason why I chose to include it in this list. For me, the more profound reason is its spread, reach and dare or fearlessness, if you will. IS has already demonstrated its presence in America, Europe, Asia and Africa this year itself and their objective of (ab)using local people to inflict local damage, globally, appears to be, unfortunately, succeeding. Their reach over internet and social media management may put some of the better run corporates and governments to shame. Pseudo civilized societies & nations, that most of us have become, have to aggressively and quickly come out with a counter strategy to deal with this menace firmly, decisively and conclusively and no one, I repeat NO ONE, can escape from his / her individual responsibility and contribution in this regard. They are shooting passenger planes, killing innocents, capturing the territories, eliminating minorities, issuing fatwas and manuals (including SOPs, Dos & Don'ts & Best Practices) on how to rape girls & kill men and we, yes – all of us – are shamelessly and helplessly watching this and consider our responsibilities over by blaming someone or other with whom we have howsoever minor or irrelevant difference and this epidemic has now spread across religions, geographical boundaries, economic might or intellectual competence. This just cannot go on and we have to proactively act, and act now, not only for the survival of this generation but also for the generations to come.

One could debate the role & responsibility of mankind in natural disasters like Nepal earthquake, Chennai floods; but accidents like stampede in Hajj, cruise ship disaster in China, explosion in Tianjin etc. still leave one wonder the value we attach on human lives while marching well into 21<sup>st</sup> century. Attacks on bloggers in Bangladesh and miseries of Syrian refugee force us ponder on the correctness and relevance of our selfish thought process notwithstanding the global condemnation of former and debate on the later. Plane accidents are terrible, irrespective of when & where these take place or number of casualties inflicted, incidents like Turkish shooting of Russian Plane, IS (allegedly) hitting another Russian plane at Sinai and German Wing crash make me wonder if I know currently applicable meanings of civilization, trust, humanity etc.

In the midst of gloom and uncertainty, the world celebrated return of Kejriwal, Nitish, Tsipras & Cameron politically, moved the debate from Grexit to Brexit and Queen Elizabeth II became the longest serving (63 years & 217 days) monarch surpassing the previous record held by her great great grandmother (Victoria). China finally devalued RMB, sending tremors in global economies and ended one child policy. Closer home, historic lad agreement with Bangladesh was cheered by one and all as was the respects & tributes showered on the demise of Lee Kuan Yew, perhaps the last of the global statesman. Little far off, US – Cuba developed bonhomie that is good for the world and Russia & Uzbekistan / Ukraine are back on

discussion table much to the benefit of millions of persons & dollars. I am not sure how many would agree but I appreciate reactions by Fareed Zakaria & Sundar Pichai to Trump's remarks, Award Wapsi and resulting debates on intolerance by the people on both sides of the fence, all of which are nothing but signs of tolerance and the world is better off with these debates than without.

I am consciously aware that this note has far outlived its utility (if it ever had any) simply because of its length and I must now shut off immediately, seeking profuse apologies from anyone who cared & and took pain to reach upto this point. I am more hopeful than I ever has been for quite some time for better times ahead (Achche din aayenge, or jaldi hee aayenge), hopefully & wishfully for larger part of humanity & geography.

I like to end by quoting Max Ehrman from Desiderata via Renuka Narayanan (SHEBABA), "Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself.... Whatever your labours and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be Cheerful. Strive to be happy."

Thank you all for all you do to & for me and I love and respect you all. Stay blessed, happy, and healthy. AMEN!

