

Re



These are times of irony. Deep irony. Covid19, the face-off between Russia and OPEC and the resulting tumbling down of oil prices, the catastrophe that has hit the global travel and tourism industry, dormant volcanoes erupting, locust attacks on food farms across the world, earthquakes, asteroid groups hurtling towards earths gravitational corridor All these in a year when economies across the world are inching closer to recession. A twin year (2020) prophesised by many doomsday prophets as the beginning of the end of days.

We are racing towards an era of ground breaking technologies (AI, Machine Learning, Medical Sciences, Space Travel, HyperLoop Transportation, MegaSafe Energy sources.... you name it), the world is fast developing a better understanding of its own needs, we are globally so interlinked and humanity has a voice like never before. Yet we stare at a pall of gloom. Like never before. Irony. Deep Irony.

No one is sure as to when these dark clouds will pass and when the world will be able to step out of the quarantining, the lock downs and the curfews. But whenever we do, we may not be stepping back into the same world we stepped out of, days or weeks ago. A lot will have changed. A lot will be waiting to happen. Economies will be reeling from the pain and the starvation of lost productivity. The erosion of underlying economic fundamentals will begin to take real shape for the masses. Jobs, Spending power, Investment outlooks all will be heading south. The pillaging of confidence that our collective and wanton panic buttons have caused will aggregate. The effect of our negatively spiralling conversations will take shape, a tailspin for humanity is imminent.

A famous caricature on change that was doing the rounds before Corona forwards completely swamped all media channels was one where someone standing behind a pulpit asks the audience – Who wants changeall seemed to respond with a raise of hands.

The next question – Who wants TO change and the picture seemed to suggest as if it was a set of deaf people, as no hands seemed to go up in response.

Humanity needs change, needs growth mindsets, creative thinking and positive outlooks like never before. While we need to be cautious, safe, disciplined and diligent with our actions, social behaviour and our investments, we need to also understand that we are facing paradigm shifts. The world we are living in, seems to be the same, but it has changed, and phenomenally so. We need newer ways of thinking, newer ways of conversing and newer ways of relating to reality.

Perhaps it is now time for us to examine a prefix that may help all of us get out of this morbid spiral that we seem to have gotten into. That prefix is – Re.

The dictionary explains Re thus;

re-/ri: ,ri, re/ *prefix*

re-; once more; afresh; anew.

Once we attach the word Re to words that we have been conventionally deploying in our conversations and our thinking, it is likely that a whole new world of possibilities emerge for us. Take some classic words as a case in point – ReDefine, ReFocus, ReImagine, RePurpose, ReValidate, ReBound.....

The corona virus communication has already redefined communication. Positive has become negative and negative has become positive. We are very anxiously scanning newspaper headlines for a reduction in positive test cases and are happy to read the increase in the specific cases of negative results of people suspected to be infected by the deadly virus.

Redefine. The virus has redefined our interpretations of positive and negative. **Redefinition** is slowly but unconsciously happening to the way we are beginning to view meanings. **Redefine** means to "give new meaning to." A really fantastic song might redefine what rock and roll can mean to people. A great muffin might redefine the idea of what a muffin can be. Technically, **Redefine** means to define again or differently—to give a new meaning. As the human race perhaps if we can **Redefine** our relationship with anxiety.

Says Mariana Plata, a psychologist from Panama - Even though the journey is not easy, **Redefining** your relationship with anxiety can help you develop a healthier relationship with yourself and with others.

In the future, when we may be faced with more and more unexpected changes, in a world where we are armed with powerful tools of spreading panic, **Redefining** our relationship with anxiety may reduce the collective gloom we experience, every time there is a large scale problem

If we scan the news that are doing the rounds, the headlines on media channels, the conversations on social media groups, the analytics that are being put forward, the focus is on

the disaster, the deaths, the number of additions to the list of positive cases, the new regions and geographies that the virus is spreading to. We are sharing fear. Focussing on the fear, the negative.

Writer John Montgomery notes that studies have shown that when animals are incapable of feeling fear, they don't survive for very long, and the same is undoubtedly true for people. Of course, most people in modern life, have far too much fear in their lives rather than too little, and this excess fear can be extremely destructive and crippling.

Biologically and evolutionarily, all “negative,” or distressing, emotions, like fear, disgust, or anxiety, can be thought of as “survival-mode” emotions: They signal to the body and brain that our survival and well-being may be at risk, and are specifically designed to motivate behaviors and bodily responses that can most effectively deal with those risks and threats.

However if survival-mode states intrude on our lives so frequently and so forcefully, it can ruin our fun, damage our relationships, and can often leave terrible destruction and misery in its wake.

Maybe its time to **ReFocus**. What if we were to instead focus on the recovery rates, the pace at which drugs are being discovered as cures, the practices that different countries are using to contain the pandemic, successful recoveries of patients – in China a 103 year old woman has recovered fully from the infection. What if we were to Refocus on what we will do once the pandemic has been contained, what are the possible ways of recovering from the losses, what could be the alternatives?

When we **Refocus** we may be giving ourselves hope. A better chance to survive. A higher probability to thrive.

Perhaps under duress and lack of options, we are increasingly getting accustomed to working from home. We are leveraging on remote working technologies. We are able to distribute work and delegate better. We are able to avoid the daily commute to office and yet deliver productive work. Collaborate. Co Create results. This inspite of the fact that this situation was thrust on us, without warning. We did not have time to plan and devise effective systems and work processes.

I still remember the difficulty of influencing my colleagues and seniors to accept Work from Home, requests made by our team members, when I used to head the HR function in an organisation not so long ago. Work from Home was almost viewed as not working, or as impossible to work. Yes it may not be possible for all jobs. But many jobs can be done without the daily commute. All we need is to **ReImagine**.

ReImagine our budgets. Our work processes. The skills we need to develop. Perhaps the discipline we need to have, to work unsupervised. The reimagination is not just for individuals or corporates alone. We need to **Reimagine** as societies. As nations. Defence budgets are several trillions of dollars more than healthcare budgets! We are more prepared to kill each other than save our own lives! **Reimagine**.

Corona Virus has made normal non-medical individuals like me more aware of the fact that life saving vaccines to fight Viruses can take anywhere between a year or two to be fully

developed. Then there will be time needed to distribute it, make it available to the needy at affordable prices. All this takes humungous amounts of time. We also have to factor in aspects of corporate greed, national politics, power games and whatnot. It is also alarming to note that effort and investments of research and development was not enthusiastically pursued after the last SARS virus outbreak. The same is the case with EBOLA, ZIKA or MERS. Medical research has taken a back seat compared to the enthusiasm in defence, commerce and other areas.

Enter **RePurposing**. **Repurposing** is the use of something for a purpose other than its original intended use. Repurposing an item can be done by modifying it to fit a new use, or by using the item as is in a new way. The practice is not limited to physical items.

On Friday 20th March (incidentally World Happiness Day) the World Health Organization (WHO) announced a large global trial, called SOLIDARITY, to find out if any of our existing drugs can treat infections of the new coronavirus respiratory disease. It's an unprecedented effort—an all-out, coordinated push to collect robust scientific data rapidly during a pandemic. The study, which could include many thousands of patients in dozens of countries, has been designed to be as simple as possible so that even hospitals overwhelmed by an onslaught of COVID-19 patients can participate.

At the forefront of this exercise is the concept of **RePurposing** existing drugs and drug combinations. This is perhaps the fastest way to develop a response to the menace. Given that we have advanced simulators and unprecedented computing power, tons of existing molecules, TeraBytes on TeraBytes of research and clinical data **RePurposing** could be our saviour.

What lessons does drug **Repurposing** hold for us? How can we **RePurpose** our lives in the post corona era? How can we prepare to **Repurpose** ourselves in this period of hibernation? Given that we have accumulated experience, carefully curated competencies, networks, resources as individuals and as organisations how can we **RePurpose** these to address the gargantuan challenges that await us?

Some of the most poignant and scary stories of community infections and CoVid deaths are coming in from Italy, Spain and Iran. The countries that seem to be most impacted from this Virus than any other countries in the world. Many pundits and experts are using data from these countries to extrapolate the impact other countries may have. Like cases on Day 01 to Cases on Day 10 to Cases on Day 30. Some extrapolations have gone on the claim that 60 million in India can be impacted, others say 50 million in Europe and so on. While these may be true or likely, we also need to examine and **ReValidate** underlying realities with these countries and their relationship with China.

Italy is one of the epicentres of fashion in the world. Italian fashion labels are ubiquitous and the bellwether for the clothing industry. Wuhan is the manufacturing haven for textiles in the world. It probably manufactures the most, the most advanced and the most economical textile material, available for the Italian buyers. They are so interdependent. When the Virus outbreak had just cast its spell, in February Italians in an act of solidarity with isolated Chinese ran a social campaign which in spirit meant – Hug a Chinese, they are human not a virus..... Besides this, Northern Italy has probably the most elderly population in whole of Europe. Most of who also have co-morbidities. Italian hospitals also did not have sufficiently

ready procedures to deal with the enormous inflow of infected patients. The rest is part of our dismal world record on CoVid 19.

Iran, because of the current geopolitical situation, is perhaps most intensely dependent and connected with China. Iranian Airline companies like Mahan operate innumerable flights to China. This besides other ways of trade like Shipping. Spain also has deep trade connections with China. Airports in Europe have high frequency flights operating to various industrial hubs of China.

A deep dive into these realities can **ReValidate** our understanding of the situation. Perhaps there are more. Perhaps others. It can help us avoid the mistakes these countries made. Develop more robust social and systemic means to deal with the pandemic. Be more pragmatic and avoid panic. What lessons does **ReValidation** hold for us, when we are making sense of data? What are the factors and causes we need to incorporate into our judgements and thinking? What do we need to **ReValidate**?

So many crises. Our survival psychology amplifying panic. Uncertainties. Global recession. Gloom. Doom. Viral conversations of fear. Is it possible to**ReBound**?

Rebound means to recover in value, amount, or strength after a decrease or decline. As a species we are highly resilient. We have evolved from our primate ancestors to who we are today. We have survived the existential perils of a primal world, natural disasters of the ice age, the political jeopardies of the dark ages, two world wars, terrorism, selfish corporate machinations what not.....

A mindset of abundance may help us **Rebound**. Borrowing liberally from Rachel Marshall's note on Abundance, if we as Humanity seek healthier outcomes than what we experience today, then it's not enough to change our behaviours. We need to grow our mindsets. Of all of the available facts in the world, each of us knows only some of them. Much of what we know today are based on apocryphal, panic driven sharing from Social Media University. The limited set of facts we have and our interpretation of them is shaping our unique anxious mental maps. Of the 7.8 billion people today, all of us have a map, and none look like ours.

We may want to turn the tide of frustration, misinformation, and disillusionment that causes us to feel that the best we can expect is to close our eyes, grit our teeth, lock ourselves in our homes, hang on for the ride and hope everything works out. Having no control and no certainty for the future is debilitating.

We can instead pin our hopes on **Rebound**. Converse about **Rebound**. Focus on **Rebound**. **Rebound** based on a perspective of abundance. Abundance believes that there's more than enough. There are ways to survive and thrive. Abundance is a belief, that in our world limits can be overcome. Abundance based **Rebound** is secure and confident. It finds possibility. It focuses on what is possible. Because **Rebound** mindset focuses on developing the ability to produce and create possibilities, meaningful possibilities, it attracts possibilities.

Abundance **Rebound** rewires our thinking, it rejuvenates our energies, it reignites our passions.

It prefixes **Re!**

(All views expressed here are the views of the essayist and does not represent the official standpoints of any organisation the essayist is associated with)