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### Horizons

#### Learning from Calamities and Disasters



**Seshadri Ramkumar**

*The author holds a PhD, CText, FTI (UK), FTA (Honorary) and is presently Professor, Nonwovens & Advanced Materials Laboratory, Texas Tech University, Lubbock, TX, USA*

As the New Year-2024 begins, we all hope for peace and prosperity. "It rests on hope and not on solid

foundation,” was the mood of many during the reconstruction of the Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris after a structural fire in 2019. Surely, hope and aspirations are traits that are needed now and forever.

**Hope and Help Shine**The recent historic rainfall in Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi districts in Tamil Nadu that has shattered the lives of several lakh people exhibits hope and grit. Such a heart wrenching natural catastrophe highlights the survival instinct, grit, and hope for better future in people in these areas. The affected people understand that it is difficult to control nature, while hope in the humanity was evident in volunteers and local people who were offering their support to bring life to some sort of normalcy. The floods in Thamraparani river have put life back by 5-7 years as viewed by local people, but they are all geared up to look forward to a positive future. I had brief interaction with few people in Azhvarthirunagari village on the southern bank of the flooding Thamraparani and understood how youngsters worked as a team and saved lives.



**Bill Miller, CEO of Breedlove Food, Inc**In the past three years, we have witnessed many natural and man-made disasters like the aggression in Ukraine, wildfires in Canada and California and the floods in Chennai and Southern districts in Tamil Nadu. While we see the pain in sufferings, the underpinning aspect that binds people to keep moving forward is hope. Hope and help go hand in hand. “There is a timeless line “no man is an island.” There is always help. Offer to listen. From there, see “discernment “above. Do not delve into life issues you have not expertise at. Help the person find resources and then communicate consistently and it may be as simple as a daily “how are you doing,” advised Bill Miller, CEO of Lubbock-based Breedlove Food, Inc.Citing from her decade-long experience at Texas Tech University, Carla Lovelace, Executive Assistant to the President of Texas Tech University, stated, “A true leader supports and helps those he/she leads. Helping others not only helps them succeed, but also benefits the individual providing the assistance to grow and develop their leadership skills.”

### **Planning and Strategizing**

The recent episodes have emphasized the need for important traits such as hope, proper planning and developing strategies. In other words, strategic planning that considers medium to long term issues are important. Considering the recent disasters and aggressions happening in some parts of the world, emphasis on strategic planning has come to limelight. Regular maintenance of waterways, investments in weather forecasting, effective and timely communication with people and concerned agencies are some examples of such planning. Additionally, local, national, and international coordination skills are needed. We witness such coordination in Ukraine with the European Parliament and the United States’ Congress. How to plan one’s

life? Bill Miller shares a sage wisdom, "Life is complex and becoming more so. Each day find a task you can accomplish such as just making your bed. Have a daily, weekly, monthly goal or set of goals. Have some form of accountability group or standard that can answer your question of "how am I doing?" According to Carla Lovelace, "It is important to understand what is at the root of the problem of failing in life. It is hard to know and understand what difficulties others may be facing or going through. In these instances, it is important to provide direction, leadership, and positive support in correcting the problem."

### **Impactful Communication**

In any natural or man-made calamity, precise communication that can lead to deliverables is needed. It is clear from the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent floods in Tamil Nadu that inter agency communications, coordination with NGOs and public are part of survival and recovery strategies. While language and diplomatic skills are necessary, a point that is becoming clear in all these scenarios is giving up ego that will enable to accomplish tasks with ease. Such calamities also bring out other positive traits in people such as sincerity, hard work, and compassion, which are needed in personal and professional lives. "You cannot succeed nor lead for longer term success if you are insincere. Sincerity is the bedrock of relationship building (BR) and BR is the critical tool to both build a team and sustain a team/mission/ enterprise through uncertain times," stated Bill Miller. Collective work and helping the needy came out clearly in such calamities and youngster and elderly can imbibe such positive attributes by witnessing these scenarios.



### **Carla Lovelace, Texas Tech University**

"I view sincerity as a valuable character trait in all aspects of life. If someone is truly sincere, this trait assures other important traits such as honesty, integrity, and transparency of the individual," stated Carla Lovelace.

**Resolutions Come and Go** It is common that with the arrival of New Year, we make resolutions, and it has become a ritual indeed these days. A favorite among the common resolutions is weight loss, which indeed is a good one. But how many live up to our own commitments? Once we make a commitment, it is important to maintain it. Again, looking at Ukraine situation, advanced countries must live up to their commitments to support Ukraine to fight the aggression. "Trust and sincerity go hand in hand with communication skills to increase one's value to others. Think about a bank account. Every day by our actions we are either making positive deposits toward these things or withdrawals by lack of candor, lack of sincerity, failed commitments and on and on," opined Bill Miller. It also makes it clear that thinking strategically before making commitment is necessary. In a similar vein, for youngsters once they decide to choose a particular college and a field of study, thought process, including consultations with peers, family and elders need to happen. Once a decision is made, it is good to stick with it. To my question on how to navigate difficulties in life, citing his personal life, Bill Miller stated, "Creating value where others saw none, helping people be more than they ever thought they

could be, overcoming failure and being the underdog. My parents were depression era parents, and I was born late in life to them. I did not suffer as a youth. I worked my way through college and realized endurance, education, communication skills and positive traits could make my life far more fulfilling by being a giver rather than a self-centered taker."In a similar vein, Carla Lovelace opines, "I am motivated by my desire to always do my best. There are days when I fall short and days when I excel. It is important to start each day anew and to be ready to manage whatever comes. Having your hard work and dedication recognized is an incentive and satisfying to me and encourages me to continue and do my best in all endeavors."

To sum up, planning for future in a strategic way involves, thinking, hard work and effective communication.

Let us make a resolution that we will spend time in planning even if it is a small purchase and such habits made at young age, become hard to die. Best wishes for a peaceful and planned future! Photo Courtesy: Flood Park Bench Flooded - Free photo on Pixabay - Pixabay