

Why the Short Stories (Daddu ki Kahania)

In October 1991, I visited Spain under EU-Exchange programme. A professor, truly cosmopolitan, who had been a UNDP consultant, said that India can't develop. I felt upset at that sweeping statement. Later we became friends and started working on a research project "Technology transfer from Spain to India". He happened to visit India in December 1991 to attend a Conference. India had just started opening economy. On return he said, with lot of excitement, "India is changing". We proceeded then on design of the questionnaire of the study. We had almost completed the design when he visited India once again in April 1992. On return he had second thoughts on the very topic of research. I was perturbed as time was running out for me. The following conversation followed:

Prof. X : "I have second thoughts on the very relevance of the topic".

Me : "Now don't say this. We have spent three months in designing the questionnaire. If we don't mail it now, we can't finish it by May end".

Prof. X : "No, No I am serious"

Me : "But, why you think so?"

Prof. X : "Because I find what India needs we don't have and what we have your country does not need".

Me : "Professor, it is too complex a statement, why can't you be specific"

Prof. X : "Look, Indians are no less endowed intellectually nor natural resource-wise. But every technology development is embedded in the socio-cultural context of that society. What you need is to learn to organize to deliver, and only your people, in the context they live, can design the product, services and technology, rooted in the natural endowment, supplier base, and skills of the people there. It is a managerial challenge so to say."

This triggered a thought whether we are looking forward to solutions elsewhere and not for looking inwards into the traits of India society that inhibits search of new ways of development. It led to a note on "Economic Development & Mindsets". Twenty five years later I find that there may be several other factors often intertwined with each other.

This set of short stories gives a glimpse of capability of Indian people, their weaknesses and shows the way to look forward. I hope it will help managers and research scholars getting ideas and thoughts to work on.

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