
Excerpts from our conversation with Mr. Ramit Singh Chimni

Ramit Singh Chimni is a global policy advisor, social innovator, and activist whose work is anchored in advancing fairness, dignity, and inclusive development. As Secretary General of the International Centre of Humanity, he operates at the confluence of grassroot realities and global systems, shaping pathways for change that are both meaningful and enduring. He is also a Director at the Eight Goals One Foundation, a member of the World Council of the José Martí International Solidarity Project and serves on the jury of the International UNESCO/José Martí Prize.

Introduction

Spain established rule over Cuba in the 15th century, but the nation changed hands between powers multiple times until it eventually became independent in 1902. The call for an independent Cuba was not driven by the natives but rather by people from all over the world who had settled there, making Cuba unique in this aspect.

The United States replaced Spain as the de facto coloniser, exerting military and economic control over Cuba's politics and industries. During Prohibition in the USA, Cuba became a hub for alcohol, gambling, and tourism, which only served to add to the wealth of American-owned companies and later, the Mafia, until the 1950s when Fulgencio Batista became President.

Under his rule, political rights were curtailed, and sugar and tobacco agriculture operated within plantation-based company towns

dominated by landowners who controlled land, housing, retail, and employment, and systemically exploited farmers by inflating prices and restricting labour mobility. This led to an eventual revolution in 1959 run by Fidel Castro, Che Guevara and others, to which the US responded by issuing an embargo that

prohibited any company with American investments from doing business with Cuba.

This effectively crippled the Cuban economy, isolating the island and restricting any scope for international trade. This blockade persists to this day. Due to the 2026 interventions by the US in Venezuela, Cuba's access to energy and other resources has further dwindled leading to numerous policy changes that are changing the dynamics mentioned in the interview.

Editor: An inherent contradiction that arises in capitalism is that the state has to play an active role in keeping systems in place that enable the capitalist society to function. In doing so, the “ensuring welfare” aspect of its duty is compromised. When talking about the US protecting the interests of the Mafia in Cuba, welfare is not the primary concern, but instead what is needed to sustain that capitalist society. Did this contradiction lead to the sort of revolution and uprising we saw in Cuba?

Ramit: I think this theory is absolutely sound, but Cuba flipped it completely. After the revolution, every Cuban had a roof over their head, offered and insured by the government. The right to housing is a right guaranteed by the government, even today. Cuba's priority lies in protecting the equality conferred to the

people who are the poorest in the country. The state can be comfortable with people getting richer as long as it is not at the expense of others being poorer. Frankly speaking, these words (capitalist, socialist, etc.) cause the majority of problems. All these terms for the system are used because that's how the world understands. For Cuba, this word is 'communism'. However, for Cuba, it is about the community. There 'communism' is a manner where there cannot be any private ownership of property. The right to housing means that the Cubans actually own the property, and not the government. They ensured that a ration system was put in place, including beer, chicken, ham, eggs, and pairs of shoes, occasionally. In the 70s and 80s, whenever any citizen of the country would get married, their 3-day honeymoon in a hotel was guaranteed by the government. This is the country that gives ownership, as required under capitalism, but what they value is a kind of socialism, which is about making sure everybody gets what everybody else has access to.

I don't think any Cuban will ever be okay with calling themselves a capitalist, which is why these terms are confusing. If we actually look at the model of Cuba, there are positive elements of capitalism that have been incorporated along with the positive elements of socialism and communism. Education is free for everybody at any age and level. You can become a doctor and pursue all your specialisations absolutely free of cost. The medical system is free.

There are problems as well, and the answer to all of those problems is simply the lack of resources because of the embargo. The

problem occurs because there are not enough medicines in the system. If there are not enough medicines in the system, you cannot cater to everything that needs to be done.

But the medical system is brilliant. They invented a vaccine for lung cancer. They had five vaccines prepared during COVID before most other countries even figured out how the vaccine would be. Everyone on the island got a vaccine shot for free. Their mortality rate was the lowest in the world. Their literacy rate is the highest in the world. The people in Cuba live up to 80-85 years. If all of the necessities are taken care of by the government, then it flips the entire concept of a capitalist economy as we understand it. Just imagine if they could fairly sell sugar, tobacco, rum, and oil and yet have the mindset that whatever money we make is going to be used towards welfare, that country will be the best in the world!

Editor: Hypothetically, if we were to adapt their model to India, do you think it could potentially work? If the political scenario allows it to be, do you think India has that kind of foundation for it to work?

Ramit: Absolutely. I think the biggest defence that people use when it comes to countries like India is that Cuba has only 10 million people, and you can't use the economics of a place which only has 10 million people in a country of 1,400 million people.

But at the end of the day, what is India made of? Small communities. If something can work in a community, you just need to identify the various communities and make it work for each of those communities. Look at the tariffs.

If you look at COVID, for example, why does Cuba have [one of] the lowest mortality rates? Because the government is providing for everybody. At the height of COVID, why did India have to open up so quickly? Because we all had to go back to work, had rents to pay and eat our food. The government could have provided, but we couldn't. Why? Because the economy will cripple, that's what they said.

If the government has the will to implement it, 110%, it can be done in India. It can be implemented in the entire world, irrespective of how economically strong we are, because our economy is dependent on the entire ecosystem. The input costs determine output costs, which further determine MRPs. If the input costs are low, the MRP will also be low. The input costs will vary based on the capacity of your country.

I've been alive in the 1980s and the early 1990s prior to liberalisation. India's economy was struggling, but my life as a young kid growing up in New Delhi was absolutely beautiful and stress-free. There was respect for everybody. In 1989-early 1990a *bhaiya* [candy floss seller] used to come on his cycle. He was a parental figure for us. He used to watch us play cricket, because for him, his priority was not selling candy floss, he was at ease. His priority was being a good role model. He would come and give us candy floss. He would play cricket with us at times. And he would have conversations, he was worldly enough that we got so much education out of him. Dignity of labour is what we are effectively talking about here right now.

Cut to 1993-94 (post liberalisation), we could see that *bhaiya* was worried. He was not able

to spend as much time with us because he had to run to the next space, because everything had become more expensive, and competition had increased tremendously. He was suffering so much that a man whose priority was being a role model to the kids shifted to making money.

One could say that capitalism is definitely telling you, "Look, we have brought in so many things which you did not have earlier". But what's the consequence? You've taken away my smile. For a child like me, you took away my opportunity of having a conversation with *bhaiya*. Because now he has to rush.

Editor: There's this social rhetoric of no ethical billionaires, according to which the cost of being a billionaire is stolen wages from a lot of people, and that is how the wealthy accumulate wealth. There are a lot of people who want billionaires to be taxed in such a way that they can never become billionaires. I wanted to ask your opinions on that.

Ramit: It's very problematic because you can't see things in isolation today, unfortunately. One isolated act will never benefit our economy, so just taxing the rich at a higher rate by itself will never be the solution.

If you have consumerism, you'll still have capitalism. It's a very easy way out to say "let's tax the billionaires". First of all, they should never have become billionaires in the first place. I agree on that, but at the end of the day, I never understand the concept of anyone having wealth more than what they can use. I will never defend billionaires. It's just that no one's actually paying attention to what is needed. Economics is always the sum of its parts.

When, say, a company goes bankrupt or shuts down, what does that imply for the economy? It affects everybody who loses their jobs because of that, that's where the impact hits. Not the billionaires. If you want to switch to that idea of taxing them or taking money away from them, you need to force them to deploy their money to make sure that they are creating more jobs.

Instead of cutting out 10,000 jobs, you force them to add 10,000 more jobs. I'm sounding very dictatorial, but that is welfare. Long story short, knee-jerk reactions help nobody. Whenever you're looking at an economic structure, you have to look at all its parts and see the impact thereof.

Editor: In India, the judiciary has played a very important role in protecting welfare, but Cuba is a state-led state. The judiciary there is actually subordinate to the main party. Why is it so? Is it because the rights of the labourers there are never violated?

Ramit: In my opinion, Cuba is the best democracy in the world, but it has a single party. There's only one candidate per ballot, just one. That doesn't sound like a democracy, but I would still say it's the best democracy in the world. This is one of the things I just throw at people just to agitate them. In my opinion, the courts and the judicial system in Cuba are brilliant, but the government has clear rights over intervening anytime they feel that the judicial system is going awry. If this happened in our country, there would be complete uproar. The whole uproar in the media is based on who has more power, the government or the judiciary, but it is not like that there. Their principle is that nobody can

be bigger than the people. Their priority is the welfare of the people, so how can any one entity be greater than the people? Which is why there are checks and balances even on the judiciary – if you are going awry, the representatives of the people can then check on you. This goes both ways; the judiciary can reprimand the government, and the government can reprimand the judiciary. At the end of the day, it will always be the government that will have the final say, because it is the will of the people.

I do have to tell you about the political system. In our country, who do we vote for? Party or leader. Either the BJP or Narendra Modi. Rahul Gandhi, Congress. Mamata Banerjee, TMC. It's the individuals who are in power. You have the photo of the candidate, and bigger than that will be the photo of the party in the background. You're essentially not giving the vote to a national leader; you're voting for a philosophy. In the USA, you're a Democrat, or you're a Republican. It doesn't matter who the person is, it doesn't matter whether they've done something for me or not, right? Mostly, in India and in the USA, with the money that gets spent on campaigning, it's ridiculous; we could have easily managed the COVID pandemic. In Cuba, even campaigning is banned. Because in Cuba, elections don't happen top-down, as in almost all the other democracies of the world. Over there, the elections are bottom-up. The representative, whoever wants to stand for elections, are only allowed to give a one-page CV. They're not allowed to campaign or make promises. It's not permitted because their focus is that if you want to represent the people, you should have already done it by now, then they'll know you and vote for you.

At the lowest level, you're voting for people you already know. Once they've done that, they are deputised to vote at the provincial level, where there are multiple candidates. When it comes to the national assembly, the reason why there are no multiple candidates is that if you, whoever that candidate is, have not got the support of the provincial candidates, where there was an open election, or at the grassroots, then you shouldn't be a candidate. I can't just stand up and say I want to be a candidate in the National Assembly; I need to have done something for the community. I need to have the trust of the district level, then the provincial level, to be able to stand as a candidate for the national level.

At the national level, people still vote. Till about 20 years ago, around 95% of Cubans still used to vote for that single candidate in the national election. Now it's at about 78%, which is still better than most of the world, but they are really sad about the fact that it's come down. Why should anybody vote for this single candidate when it's a foregone conclusion that that person will win? Effectively, people still voted because that was the check and balance. Full respect is placed in the candidate voted for at the grassroots level, who will determine who goes to the national assembly. But if that candidate errs, then the people have the final vote to turn back what they have decided. So the validation is saying that yes, the system works.

Editor: I wanted to ask you more about the immigration crisis; it's a massive issue there. I think you can also link it to the 2018 rollout of the internet, because one gets access to a lot more ideas. So, when you're saying that the

state is designed in such a way to provide people with what they want, if they gain exposure to something that they now think they want-

Ramit: You're absolutely spot on. Frankly speaking, I think the solution to that problem is more conversations. That is where, in my opinion, the Cuban government is failing, because generations have changed.

We're talking about a revolution that happened in 1959, the principles of which are still governing the country. The country has benefited from those principles well, despite the blockade, but now you're looking at three generations having passed. So the youngest generation now, they won't understand why they should not have their Air Jordans or their Supreme sneakers. You can't blame them either. The great American dream, as they call it, is what is fueling the immigration.

What's the psychology behind this? If I've emigrated to the US, why will I tell you that I made a mistake? I have pride, I have ego, I couldn't have been wrong. The second thing is that you have this mother hen mindset, that maybe it went wrong for me, but I can't let others lose hope. So, I must show them that things are better. All of these reasons are why people don't actually share their true immigration stories.

You see it in India also. In Delhi, if you go to Nehru Place, you see how, unfortunately, the labourers end up being mistreated and exploited, but when they go back to the village, they're still heroes. If you ask people, "Are you happier in the village or are you happier in the city?" They will always say

they're happier in their villages. But what has capitalism said? Come here and build our palaces. If you do that, then you'll get money, and then you'll be able to go home and be the hero.

Editor: We talked about how a lot of our urban cities are built by migrant workers, but there is this dichotomy that they are not provided with dignified living or working spaces. So, we wanted to ask you how the question of who belongs to the city can be reconstructed to develop a more inclusive urban space.

Ramit: The answer is Cuba, again. Within Cuba, there are still distinctions. Some people are richer, some people are poorer, but everybody's got houses; it doesn't matter whether you are rich or not from a state standpoint. If your house is broken down, the state provides a place for you. If a stay is not available, you get put on a list, which means the next time more housing is available, the person who's on top of the list will get that house. On that list, it doesn't matter whether you're an ambassador, judge, labourer, or sweeper.

Here in India, again, classic capitalism. If you don't have the money to buy the house, you will not get the house. Which is why the classic thing is, every Bombay high-rise has a slum below it. Why? Because the ones who built the high-rise have settled there themselves. To solve that, what we need is to recognise that our earth belongs to everybody.

When I told you that the revolution in Cuba was not by Cuban indigenous people, because anybody who came into Cuba became a

Cuban just by virtue of the nature of the island, which was communitarian in its nature, it was about supporting each other and collaborating. So, it did not matter where they came from; they were provided for. The same principle needs to be applied in Delhi. We need to recognise that the reason people come to Delhi is that we have not given enough to their villages. If their villages had hospitals, proper education with the provision of all facilities, why would they come here? There'll be a lot of people who'd rather not be in the city in that case, and you'll be able to create a situation where there is equal population distribution across boards.

In India, things have improved, but there is a marked difference still. Unfortunately, there's a long way to go at this point, and the delta keeps increasing. If you keep increasing the villages and the quality of life there, but you keep increasing the extravagance in the cities, the gap will still remain and become larger. The gap must be clubbed not just by virtue of saying, okay, we're not spending any money in our cities, we're spending money in our villages. You still have to see a holistic case. We need to make sure that belonging should not be restricted to a particular city, but rather to everything that is available to us.

Editor: There is a popular game in game theory, the stag-hunt (*Two hunters must decide whether to cooperate to hunt a stag or to hunt a hare individually. Nash equilibria include a scenario where both hunt stags together or both hunt hares*). What I see, instead of the stag-stag equilibrium that we could have met, we are deviating and shifting to a hare-hare equilibrium. Is it really practical then to think

that we can have a purely people-centric or welfare-centric ecosystem?

Ramit: It's absolutely possible. It's possible when communities at the lowest level decide that's how it's going to be. It doesn't need to be at the national level. It's about every single community. If we collectively in this room right now examine what our resources are, X number of coconut waters, for example. I've not drunk this (coconut water), so I can either just keep it with myself, or I can see that she's thirsty and give it to her. The moment we start thinking that, then you will need a leader, you need expansion, resources, etc. As human beings, how many people do we interact with throughout our lives on a meaningful basis? 50-200 maximum. It's small enough to have a conversation and to share our possessions. Does our solution have to come from eradicating billionaires? It can also come from us understanding our ecosystem. Amongst the 11 of us (in this room), we can still ensure equilibrium for the rest of our lives.

Editor: But don't outside forces also affect us?

Ramit: External forces only determine how many resources are available to this group. Within this group, it is up to you what you do with those resources. That is where that change is happening, which is why taxing the billionaires does not work. Even if you've taxed the billionaires, what you have remaining with you, you still need to have the will to distribute amongst each other. If that understanding is there, no external factors will make a difference.

Back to Cuba. The whole world is cut off because of the embargo, but within Cuba, they

have decided that they will ensure the most equitable outcomes with the available resources. *When we had the money, we were sending you on your honeymoon. Now we don't have money, you only get two loaves of bread a month. But everybody gets those two loaves of bread.*

Editor: Consumerism is so ingrained in not only our economy, but in everyone's mindsets. I agree that we need to utilize our resources efficiently, but what incentives do people have to do that?

Ramit: The reason why this whole superstructure of commerce and transactions works as well as it does is because it plays with our emotions in a manner which creates that sense of deprivation. We crave convenience, we're craving our dopamine hits because that's just how our bodies are created.

Do you know the number of people who die mining diamonds? If they showed you that, would you buy diamonds? That "this diamond has been excavated with the blood of 800 Nigerians". All of you eat chocolate, do you know how many people die making it? Tea, do you know how the plantation workers in Darjeeling are living? If you are shown the freshness of the Darjeeling *baghs* (tea gardens), you will love to buy the tea. If you're shown the houses in which they're forced to live, and then they get beaten up if they don't pick an X amount of tea leaves, are you going to buy the tea? A lot of people switch to a vegetarian diet after they see a chicken being slaughtered. "Finger-licking good" by KFC is what sells. Packaging matters. We don't think about these things because for us it's convenient. We've got the

diamond in our hand, it's shiny, it's sparkly, it's bright. The store was beautiful, and they gave me a Pepsi when I went to buy it. This mindset needs to be flipped from the roots.

Editor: In collaboration with LaborNet, you worked in the sector of vocational education. What are some very important vocational skills that could help labourers get into semi-skilled working employment?

Ramit: I believe that's a bit of a problematic way to look at vocational education because we end up thinking that vocational education is to uplift those who are not as privileged as others to higher positions because they get jobs and they make money.

In reality, do you know which countries have the maximum amount of vocational education? It's not the developing nations; it's the developed nations. It's not only for the upliftment of those who are not as privileged, but it is also for creating that equilibrium amongst all of us so that we can respect each other and the roles that we do.

There is, of course, the fact that there is more money to be made for everybody if they become skilled, and then they can get employment. But the bigger aspect is the dignity of labour. If I know how to do plumbing, I will be able to relate to the plumber who comes to my house. *agar mujhe electrician ka kaam aata hai, jab electrician bhaiya mere ghar aate hai* (if I know an electrician's work, when they come to my place), I will be able to engage with them. *"Bhaiya aise kyu kar rahe ho, hume toh ye sikhaya tha, and then he says mein bata raha hu aise hota hai"* (example conversation he

would have with an electrician regarding techniques). I can have that conversation.

We feel that we are not the ones who create that distinction between, say, a carpenter and us. But in reality, what ends up happening? We will still not have that conversation with the carpenter. But if there was one of our peers, then we would have that conversation. Somewhere, subconsciously, we are creating that distinction, not because we are bad people, but because we can't relate. That's what vocational education delivers, in my opinion. It delivers the dignity of just living to everybody around us, because it brings us all on the same page. Everybody understands that these are the skill sets that I also have an understanding of, which I can talk to you about, meaning I will not treat you as someone lower than me, but I will actually treat you as someone who, in carpentry, is better than me.

To answer your question, I think it's very important for the entire country and not just those who are seeking job opportunities. Those who are seeking job opportunities, it will be dependent on supply and demand. At different points in time, depending on where you are located, different skills are going to be in demand.

The beauty of vocational education is that a lot of the things that are in demand can be taught in a shorter span of time. So, if you're in Pune, Bangalore, Hyderabad, or Indore, which is becoming an IT hub, of course, you need more data operators, so vocational education should be focused towards more data operators.

Whereas in places like Jaipur, for example, you need carpentry, because that is where the demand is. That's really how vocational education, in my opinion, needs to manoeuvre. It should never be - "Okay, these are the top five skills that you must have". No, it's the region, it's the time, the way that the economy is structured, the supply, the demand, etc., that determines what vocational educational skill needs to be propagated at one point in time. For that, the biggest thing that we need to do, as I said earlier, is to make the transfer of those skill sets much, much quicker.

Editor: In Cuba, you said that they have a lot of economic problems, like the blockade, and they are still doing so well [in terms of some human development indicators]. I had a similar question regarding Meghalaya. You and your team wrote a paper that showed that Meghalaya is in the top five in almost every single skill, even though it has various limitations like political instability, illegal mining, and smuggling. What do you think is the reason?

Ramit: I think the northeast of our country is probably the closest that we've had to community living. A classic example I give is not from Meghalaya but from Mizoram.

The first time that I went there, 15 odd years ago, at the hotel that I was staying in, there was a bellman opening and closing doors. So, there was a basketball match in the evening. Pretty much the entire town goes to watch the basketball match because that's entertainment. At about 5 o'clock, *jab unki chutti hoti hai* (is when they get off work), and we were all sitting in the lobby just waiting to leave for the basketball match. He [the bellman] finished,

went inside, changed his clothes, and came back. He sat in the lobby, and then a person from the office approached him and started chatting him up.

Ramit describes a conversation between this person and the bellman, who speak as friends and discuss how to commute to the match.

That man who was having this conversation was the owner of the hotel, [at] the same place where this man was opening and closing doors. Yet outside of their job roles there is no distinction. They are still friends.

Which is again, the same thing in Cuba, whether you're a sweeper, you're a doctor, you earn the same amount of money. We're not distinguishing between the contribution you're making to society because, without a sweeper, streets are going to be dirty, people are going to fall sick, and there will be problems. Without a doctor, people will fall sick, and there will be problems. Both the sweeper and the doctor have an impact on the health of an individual.

That entire community understanding results in a situation where there is holistic development of the individuals. I, as an individual, have so many opportunities to learn from everybody around me that in these employable skills, I become better. I'm better at finishing tasks because I've been doing that and helping everybody out. It's not *mera kaam, mera kaam. tumhara kaam, tumhara kaam*. (My work is mine, and your work is yours) The opportunities expand so much, right?

Which is why, say, in Meghalaya and other parts of the Northeast, the overall

development becomes better because you're not just focused on "my education, my schooling, my college", etc., but [on] everybody around you. So, your learning is not just your learning, but it is also ancillary learning from people around you.

Editor: In Cuba, because of the recent embargoes and resulting resource constraints, wages have not been increasing, and they're not enough to sustain their employees. So, people end up participating in the underground economy, seeking alternative employment, etc. I wanted to see if we could draw parallels between this and corruption in India, especially in the public sector, which is also primarily driven by low public sector wages.

Ramit: First, I'll correct the Cuba part. It's not a chicken-and-egg story over there. The underground market started first, and then the wages became unacceptable. The wages were very low; if you convert them into Indian rupees, maybe 800 rupees for [the] entire month.

But the reality for a Cuban citizen is that their house is free, their education is free, everything else is free, and electricity is extremely subsidised. They are only spending 5% of their money on electricity, which is as much as in any other place, and only spending 7-8% on food. So, if you actually broke down that income, what you were buying from those 800 rupees was also cheap, and was provided to you either free or at a subsidised cost.

Once it [the underground economy] began, then things started becoming more expensive. This has created a situation where there is less

produce in the ration system, which means that people who could have easily relied on the rations now need to go out and buy at higher rates. The origin of it is very, very clear. If everybody were earning the same amount, and spending on the same things which cost the same amount, there is no need to ever change your salaries or increase your salaries, because *salary se khareedoge kya? jo cheez aap khareedoge, woh bhi agar ussi rate pe rahe hai, then you have solved that problem of inflation* (if the things you are spending your salary on are still at the same price, you have solved the problem of inflation) in that sense.

So, I think the problem is not that their incomes are increasing slowly. The problem is that the underground market started, which then led to a situation where people require more money because the total number of resources available at a subsidised cost is becoming lower.

In India, in my opinion, in a very different way, it's the same thing. Historically, in Delhi itself, there's a lot of hoarding that ends up happening. Rates go up, elections happen, and rates go down because everything gets released into the market. It's about demand and supply. Corruption originates from demand and supply. If there were no problem with demand and supply, there just couldn't be corruption. It's impossible to have corruption when everybody is being supplied.

Editor: Cuba has very little Internet penetration. Cuba's main export is healthcare and doctors. And there are numerous accounts which say doctors felt like they were being watched by the government to make sure they

didn't defect. If you are saying that Cuba is the best form of democracy, that people are very happy, why is it that we see so many human rights violations coming from Cuba? Or is it just a Western narrative?

Ramit: Okay, that's an extreme. In terms of doctors, are they being watched? 100%. Because there's a responsibility of the state to make sure that its citizens are safe when they're outside the country. That's where it originates from. Medical education in Cuba is free, right? So, everything is being paid for by the government. Should they not even have the right to have a conversation with their person if they're thinking of defecting?

But then, where it stretches is that they don't have freedom to talk to anybody or what they say is being controlled. Nonsense. Inside Cuba, people criticise the government too. When I say criticise the government, [they] criticise the actions. The point is, as the government, if you say things which are contradictory to what I have done, I am fine with it as long as you're coming back. If you're not coming back, then I need to know so that I can have a conversation with you about it. Because what is the biggest issue with respect to what we just spoke about? *Kaise hum change karenge? Baat karke* (how are we going to change? by talking)

But what does capitalism do? It shuts down conversations. You don't go to your *kirane ki dukaan* (local shop), you order from here (your phone). We ask *konsi cheez better hai? Kya zyada bik raha hai?* (Which is the better brand, and which sells more?) But they don't want you to have the conversation because if

you did, there'd only be one shampoo that would sell, right?

The world's economy thrives on clashes in whatever way, shape or form. Pepsi and Coca-Cola survive because of each other. If Pepsi weren't there, Coca-Cola would not be as successful and vice versa. Monopolies, by themselves, very rarely go beyond a glass ceiling. The moment it becomes a duopoly, at the bare minimum, that's when everybody shatters the glass ceiling and grows because they increase consumerism. If there were only one company selling mobile phones, I would have nothing else to desire, and I would not change this mobile phone for six-seven years. The utility is the same, but the brand is what creates competition, which increases the market, which is the reason again that the whole monopoly business doesn't work because of competition.

Editor: I have a personal question. You worked for eight years with farmers. I think you started around the age of 17. How could you go about that without any experience?

Ramit: In all honesty, I think I was very privileged which basically meant that I could leave my home, go to the villages where I went to the Nepal border and literally either sleep in the fields till such time someone did not say *humare ghar mein aake so jao, yaha kyu so rahe ho* (someone allowed me to sleep in their home), there was no problem there.

If you actually want to find a way to put yourself in a position where you can help others, because you can't do it from the outside, you have to bring yourself to that position. You have to find a way in which you

can do it, which will be different for every individual, right?

To contribute, and if that is a desire that one has, you have to be able to understand who you're working with. Once you're as close, *agar aapka dil sahi jage pe hai na kuch na kuch aap madat karte rahoge, apne aap ko, apne aas paas ke logo ko*, (if your intentions are true, you will end up helping yourself and the people around you), you will always keep finding ways of balancing things up in whatever circumstances you may be in. And

honestly, that's really the best for all of us collectively, if all of us thought that way, then thought, what can I do with somebody else?

So, get closer. Get closer. Understand better. Once you understand better, you will have your answers. For anybody to tell you that, okay, you must do this, or you must do that, I would say they're doing an injustice to even your abilities to be able to contribute. Because your abilities to contribute will only come to the fore when you understand better.

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