

The price of a cup of coffee on the opposite ends of the world is perhaps the same

I think about the price of a coffee cup as I sit at one of the few places that I haunt for the purpose- except, that I generally order tea. Anywhere from a dollar for the basic cup of Joe to four plus for the flavored concoctions- and the customers, anyone earning less than minimum wage to hundred plus dollars an hour.

Why the thought comes to mind is because when I was in India, I was shocked to pay forty five bucks for a shot sized cup of coffee at one of the many trendy coffee places in New Delhi, while I had to pay only about ten bucks for hiring a rickshaw. So, that rickshaw-wallah made about thirty to forty an hour if he got continuous customers, and probably would have spent his entire hour's worth of earnings on one single cup.

Even here, a basic cup of chai or coffee could set back a less than a minimum wager by half of his hourly pay.

The gap between the haves and the have-nots seems to be increasing globally, and this might be circular projection on my part, as I ring the globe from New Delhi to Maine and vice versa, yet it seems a reasonable enough assumption by the laws of interpolation.

And, don't we all rule our lives with statistics and mathematical formulas. We even judge our Presidents and Presidential candidates based on numbers in the polls, quietly adjusting our thought processes to match the numbers, without realizing that we have done any such thing- mentally calibrating capabilities and worldwide phenomena based on media feeds.

So, where does the price of a cup of coffee fall based on numbers? I don't recall coming across polls that indicate one way or the other whether it is high or low. It is a luxury and yet not, considering how we attach ourselves to the drip as soon as we get up in the morning, and keep reattaching ourselves to it throughout the day. So, maybe in Delhi for most people, the drip is chai still, and coffee, a luxury.

But chai or coffee, curried rice or burgers, it is the affordability of things. How affordable is food in two distinct and opposite parts of the world? And one immediately asks, for who? The people with money or those without? Sadly, the latter category is increasing on both ends- it's just that in India it is a mammoth. And, unless the economic policies do wondrous acrobatics to incorporate the poor, it's going to keep multiplying.

There will be more and more people who will join the chorus of hungry bellies, and in their sheer helplessness, perhaps revolt. Against institutions that are useless for them or segregate them even more from the people who appear to have everything, and perhaps, have it too. Governments, corporations, people- all would be a target for gas filled empty guts.

With the entrenched bureaucratic ineptitude and sheer difficulty of taking care of a population that includes in the hundreds of millions: The homeless on the congested streets and by-lanes of the sprawling metros and towns of India; The rain dependent, debt ridden farmers of India; The fishing communities that fish from small row boats in the turbulent Indian ocean and the Bay of Bengal; The poor in the largest slums in the world; The sellers whose entire families depend upon the sale of twenty pounds of vegetables or fruits per day- an excuse, *just an excuse*, might be made.

But, why are there homeless here, in America? Children hungry and unclothed?

Where does money come from for a war but not for peace? Where is it generated? How is it generated? Why can a government, apparently the richest in the world, buy a

war plane but not fund school programs? Why can a government give itself pay raises and not raise its homeless off the streets? Why can a government host big campaigns and fund raisers where each plate costs thousands of dollars and not feed its children?

Maybe these are often repeated questions that everyone knows, but I have yet to hear an answer.