

INCIDENT |

A few days ago, I was near the diplomatic zone in the city looking for a particular building, and I had to move from street to street. Upon reaching one particular street, I saw some rapid movement amongst two people. As I moved closer, I noticed a man pulling a woman's hair and throwing her to the ground. My heart froze. He kicked at her mercilessly and beat her with his sandals. I jumped out of my car and screamed! At that moment, the vile man shifted his look towards me, while the woman got some time to get back up. I threatened to call the police, the woman begged me to. I ran to the police I had noticed on the previous street.

When I came back with a responsive policeman, I realised that there were people around the whole time. I was so panicked at what was happening; I missed the worst part of the situation- the bystanders- watching what was happening, hypnotised by what they feel is entertaining, not moving a muscle to save the woman, not straining their vocal chords to speak out against injustice.

Their faces disgusted me to my very gut. I shouted at them all- around five to six men and one woman. I called them all criminals as I left the place exasperated, shocked, scared. What have my people become?

Still shaking with some form of anxiety, I came to the office and had to find out why it was that people just stand and just watch injustice take place, why sights of violence and crime paralyses our souls along with our bodies.

The internet introduced me to the bystander effect. Also known as the bystander apathy, or the Genovese syndrome, is a social psychological phenomenon that refers to cases in which people do not offer any means of help to a victim, even when the act of violence or crime is taking place right in front of them. Several variables help to explain why the bystander effect occurs. These variables include: ambiguity, cohesiveness and diffusion of responsibility.

The study on this phenomenon began after a horrifying incident back in 1964- the murder of Kitty Genovese in front of thirty-seven people. That incident began raising questions, questions similar to the ones I asked when I saw that woman being struck, out on the open streets, in the middle of a bright, sunny day, with so many people standing around her- how could so many people look on and turn away as she was being attacked? What did that collective inability to act reveal about ourselves, our communities, and our belief systems? 52 years on, the notion of the bystander effect, and why we continue to look away in the face of danger, remains a terrifying and cruel reality.

Even in 2010, a Guatemalan homeless man saved a woman from being attacked, only to be stabbed multiple times himself. While he lay there in a pool of blood, some people walked by, some stared for a while, some shook and left, and some videotaped the whole incident- something we have now become very familiar with after the video of Rajon's death all over social media.

John Darley and Bibb Latane were the two social psychology researchers who published a series of papers beginning in 1969, on this unwanted phenomenon. They wanted to show why the witnesses to Genovese's murder, a case both researchers followed avidly, behaved with such indifference, and whether they could calculate a minimum number of people present to create a shared uncertainty.

Diffusion of responsibility can manifest itself in such situations, which leads to a group of people who, through action or inaction, allow events to occur which they would never allow if they were alone. This is referred to as 'groupshift' - or 'mob-mentality'.

What Darley and Latane observed through their research is that the probability of help is inversely related to the number of bystanders, as in the greater number of people that are present during the act of violence, the greater chance of inaction.

But this is not a problem we can collectively solve. This can only be tackled on an individual level. We first have to improve our own characters and there are plenty of ways to do that. Unless and until we know ourselves, unless we learn to recognise the gravity of situations of injustice, unless we learn how to use our emotions and intellect together, and until we put our morals to good use- nothing will change and we will be our own destruction as a nation. It is time to speak out against any injustice, in any place, against anyone. It is time for us to rise and stand up for each other.

7 FACTORS THAT CAN HELP OVERCOME THE BYSTANDER EFFECT

While the bystander effect can have a negative impact on social behavior, altruism and heroism, researchers have identified a number of different factors that can help people overcome this tendency and increase the likelihood that they will engage in helping behaviors. Some of these include:

1. Witnessing Helping Behavior

Sometimes, just seeing other people doing something kind or helpful makes us more willing to help others. Researchers have found that when we observe other people engaging in prosocial behaviours, such as donating blood, we are more likely to do the same.

2. Being Observant

One of the key reasons people often fail to take action when help is needed is that they do not notice what is happening until it is too late. Ambiguous situations can also make it difficult to determine if help is truly needed. Since no one else was taking action, people assumed that there must not be an emergency. Rather than relying purely on the responses of those around you, staying alert and attuned to the situation can help you best decide how to react.

3. Being Skilled and Knowledgeable

When faced with an emergency situation, knowing what to do greatly increases the likelihood that a person will take action. How can you apply this to your own life? While you certainly cannot be prepared for every possible event that might transpire, taking first aid classes and receiving CPR training could help you feel more competent and prepared to deal with potential emergencies.

4. Guilt

Researchers have found that feelings of guilt can often spur on helping behaviours. So-called "survivor guilt" is just one example. Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, some people who had survived the event felt driven to help others in the aftermath.

5. Having a Personal Relationship

Researchers have long known that we are more likely to help people that we know personally. In an



Manan Morshed, from the series *Leftover Stories*, 2016.

emergency situation, people in trouble can help cultivate a more personalized response even in strangers by taking a few important steps. Simple behaviours such as making direct eye-contact and engaging in small talk can increase the likelihood that a person will come to your aid. So if you are in trouble, you might be better off singling out an individual from the crowd, making eye contact, and directly asking for assistance than making a general plea to the group.

6. Seeing Others as Deserving of Help

People are also more likely to help others if they think that the person truly deserves it. This explains why some people are more willing to give money to the homeless while others are not. Those who believe that homeless people are in their situation due to laziness or unwillingness to work are less likely to give money while those who believe that these individuals are genuinely deserving of help are more likely to provide assistance.

7. Feeling Good

Researchers have also found that feeling good about ourselves can contribute to prosocial behaviours. People who feel happy or successful are more likely to lend assistance, and even relatively small events can trigger such feelings. This is often referred to as the "feel good, do good" effect.

List source: verywell.com



STRAIGHT FROM THE ELEPHANT'S MOUTH

One of our brothers remained stranded on your side of the water. Stranded is actually a polite way to put it; in reality he was trapped only. Having been washed across from a different region altogether, he must have thought his ordeal would soon come to a close when people pretending to be from our region came to help him. They failed miserably making me realise no matter how powerful your region is, talks of elephant rescue and tiger population are all hot gas; maybe you guys can look into channeling all that hot gas every parliament session is sure to emanate and solve your cooking problem. But I digress, no? As an elephant, I should not be spending time formulating your policies, although I would never be demented enough to come up with a plan where I suddenly declare all commercial buildings

illegal, only to make a U-turn and say, "Ok give us 10 lakh and you can do whatever you want again."

But I digress again, no? A curse of having a long, long memory only. Which brings me to my point. If you were one of those jerks who shot my friend with a dart, tied his legs in chains and then strapped him to a Mango tree (I can snap most material, you know that right?) and then failed to help him in any way, you should know, I remember your faces. And I will find you. Not to hunt you of course; I can't remember the last time any elephant went out of his way to hunt a man. But I will express my disappointment in your behaviour. I am sorry, but level with me for a minute, if your peanut sized brains can handle that. How am I, a creature that does not speak your language, to assume that someone is

trying to save my life when they shoot me, tie me up and then a mighty horde of humans stands in front of me, flashing light and pointing? Does that sound like a normal rescue mission to you? We prefer to stand next to our injured friends and cry because that makes more sense, only. We then bury them with sticks and stones, but we don't forget.

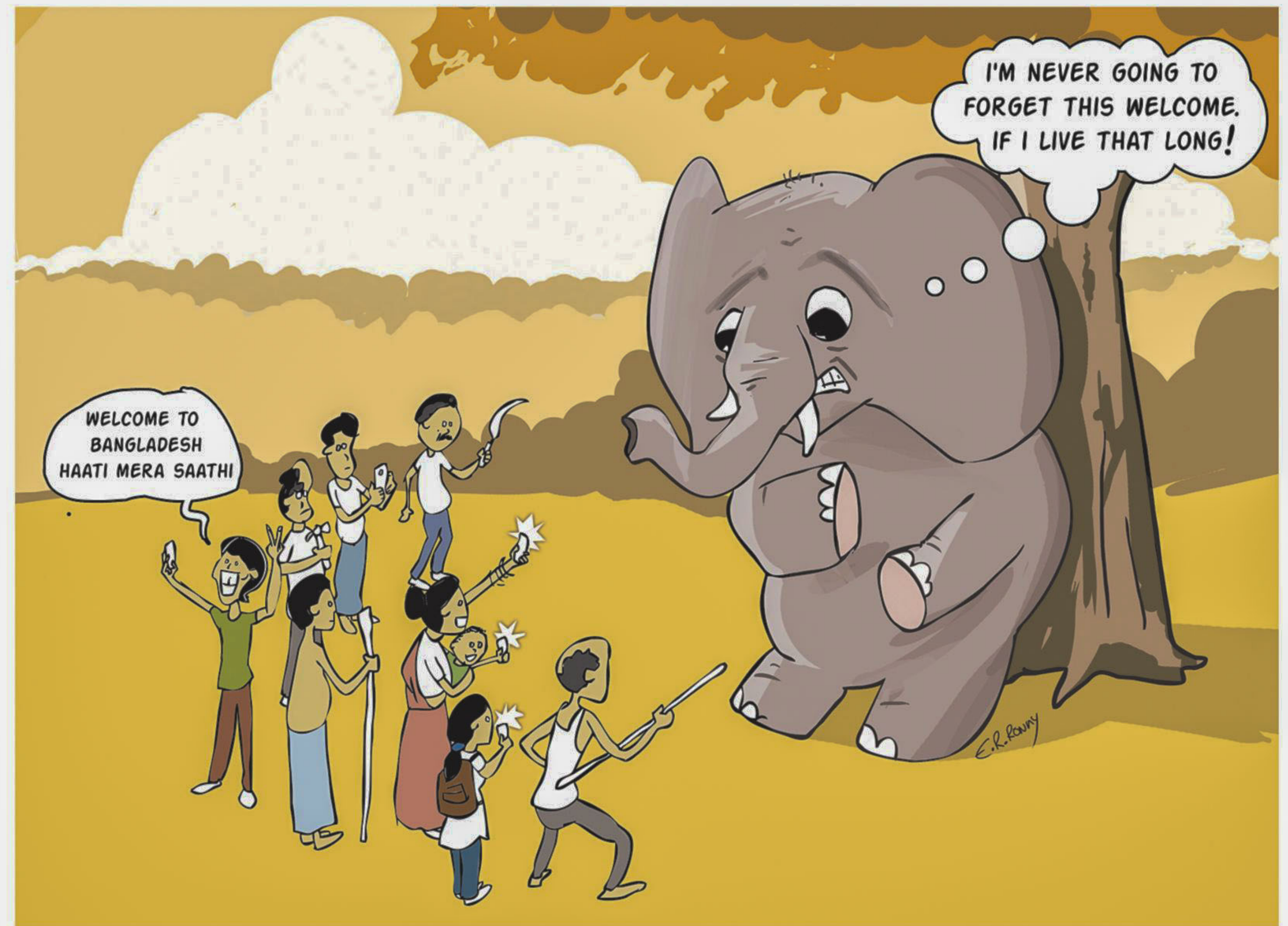
Now, I have a doubt about the rescue mission from my region too. Perhaps they have pre-poned that as well. A lot of you have thrown shade my friend's way (learned that lingo) because you have called him an elephant of a distant nationality. This confuses me, only. How did you separate these so-called regions? Why are you fighting over dirt, when you have no choice in it? Or you do, so I heard. Apparently, you can become another region's member by winning

lotteries or having a lot of money, which must be very nice. I still don't get why you would not save me if I was washed up in your locality.

And mother promise, father promise, God promise, I or any of us have never expressed any affiliation with any nation. If the elephants here are anything like the people, then probably I or BangaBahadur would have zero reason for expressing affiliation with any of YOU lot either, because none of you currently make any sense to me. I hope this letter finds you in the best of health and do my a favour and cover our friend in sticks, stones and leaves. At least pay him his last respect

Your friend

Whatever name you gave me.



PEARLS OF WISDOM

"THE GOAL OF MY WORK IS TO HELP ASSURE THAT WE CAN CREATE A WORLD OF ABUNDANCE IN WHICH WE MEET THE BASIC NEEDS OF EVERY MAN, WOMAN AND CHILD."



PETER DIAMANDIS
Greek-American engineer, physician, and entrepreneur



"PEOPLE FIRST CONCERN THEMSELVES WITH MEETING THEIR BASIC NEEDS; ONLY AFTERWARDS, DO THEY PURSUE ANY HIGHER NEEDS."

ABDOLKARIM SOROUSH
Iranian thinker and reformer



"IT'S NEVER OVERREACTING TO ASK FOR WHAT YOU WANT AND NEED."

AMY POEHLER
American actress, comedian, director, producer and writer