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DOES FREEDOM MEAN ECONOMIC PROSPERITY?

"Freedom without the ability to fulfill oneself is no more than a prison in disguise."

It was one of those pleasant days typical of this capital city in the heart of Africa. We gathered in a quiet suburban office, seated around a large central table. Among us were key stakeholders and decision-makers of the local agro sector, convened to discuss next year's mango export program—an issue critical to the local agro-industry, the economy, and the livelihoods of smallholders.

The conversation was lively, with participants sharing ideas on how to advance the topics on the agenda. Amid the discussion, someone remarked, "*Freedom is very important for smallholders*." This comment didn't slow the pace of the conversation because everyone agreed, and the discussion quickly moved on.

But for me, that statement lingered. It transported me back to the summer of 1991, when I visited Calcutta, India, and saw countless people sleeping under bridges. Then, as of now, I have found myself asking: What kind of freedom do the poor truly have? Is freedom simply the

absence of taxes or obligations, or is it something much deeper? What does freedom mean when your income is only a dollar or two a day?

Freedom Vs. Survival

There is a type of "freedom" that exists when you're entirely self-reliant, cut off from civilization—when your survival depends solely on your own abilities, as perhaps hunter-gatherers once experienced before the Agricultural Revolution. But this kind of freedom exists only in isolation, as it means no community, collaboration, or responsibilities toward others—and, in turn, no businesses, no income, and no shared prosperity.

But what about the freedom that comes with collaboration? The person in the meeting wasn't talking about isolation; they were referring to the freedom that a higher income can provide. This kind of freedom allows people to pursue their dreams, support their families, take vacations, and work in a field they love. True freedom, especially economic freedom, is never a solitary endeavor. It requires partnership, collaboration, and a willingness to sacrifice some personal autonomy for the greater good. **In fact, economic freedom always involves delegating personal resources to others.** Furthermore, a manager or leader, whose income may be higher than that of a worker in the same organization, often must delegate more of their time and resources to ensure the success of the collective.

Delegating Freedom For Prosperity

Take my own life as an example. How do I "manage my freedom"? In reality, much of it has been delegated:

Religion: I delegate part of my freedom to honor traditions that are meaningful to me.

Nationality: I delegate part of my freedom to uphold the laws of my country.

Business: I sacrifice some personal time to collaborate with others at work, ensuring our collective success.

Family & Friends: I give my time and energy to my loved ones, preserving and nurturing relationships that enrich my life.

We all give up some of our freedom to maintain and develop the ecosystem in which we live. In fact, it is precisely this delegation of freedom—this willingness to give and invest in relationships, businesses, and communities—that allows us to thrive.

From Egypt To Amazon: Freedom Within Limits

Look at the Israelites who fled Egypt, escaping slavery only to choose, **of their own will**, to adopt laws and prohibitions that limited their freedom. By voluntarily accepting constraints, they strengthened their society and increased their chances of prosperity.

Consider Amazon, a company with over 1.5 million employees. Does its CEO, despite his wealth, have the freedom to do whatever he wants? Clearly not. In fact, the CEO must delegate much of his freedom to the organization in order to ensure its smooth operation and continued

success. This principle holds across all organizations: without a willingness to give up some personal autonomy for the greater good, the organization—and its individuals—cannot prosper.

The False Freedom Of Smallholders

Smallholders who cling to their independence, believing they are preserving their "freedom," ultimately pay for it with continued poverty. On the other hand, those who choose to delegate and collaborate are far more likely to achieve economic prosperity. The more willing we are to trust others and delegate parts of our freedom, the more we increase our chances to prosper.

The Path Forward

True prosperity isn't about unbridled freedom; it's about the willing choice to give up some of that freedom to be part of something greater than ourselves and beyond the present moment. The more we trust others—the state, a company, a community, or a spouse—the more willing we are to delegate some of our resources, i.e., freedom, and the more we all benefit.

Let's work toward a world where smallholders and others collaborate, giving up the illusion of "pure freedom" in exchange for true prosperity. After all, what is freedom worth if you go to bed hungry in a house that leaks every time it rains?

Together

The Kibbutz demonstrates the profound impact of individuals choosing to delegate (a big) part of their resources and personal freedom to "The Organization," elevating togetherness through collaboration, cooperation, and integration to their highest levels. The Kibbutz model shows how those once impoverished farmers transformed their circumstances through intense togetherness.

However, as the following examples illustrate, even with lower levels of "delegating self-freedom" and togetherness, individuals—whether impoverished or not—can significantly improve their livelihoods by working together, adopting a shared vision and mission, and scaling their efforts toward success.

Examples:

India's Amul Dairy Cooperative: Amul Dairy began as a small group of farmers forming a cooperative in Gujarat. Today, it is a global brand, transforming the lives of millions of dairy farmers. They gained access to technology, better distribution, and larger markets by pooling resources. This cooperative model has boosted incomes and improved the quality of life for small dairy farmers across India.

Rwanda's Coffee Sector Transformation: After the 1994 genocide, Rwanda's coffee farmers formed cooperatives to improve farming techniques and access premium markets. By organizing together, smallholders increased their income, selling beans at premium prices on the global market. This cooperative model has allowed Rwandan farmers to gain economic power and lift themselves out of poverty.

Mondragon Corporation (Spain): Founded in the 1950s, Mondragon grew from a small cooperative into a global enterprise employing over 80,000 people. It operates on democratic decision-making and shared ownership principles, reinvesting profits into the community. Workers have a say in the company's future and share in the economic benefits of their labor.

Hollywood Film Industry: Hollywood thrives on collaboration, bringing together directors, actors, screenwriters, investors, and specialists from diverse fields. Each team contributes unique expertise to a highly specialized process. Collaboration is the industry's backbone, enabling creative partnerships that produce high-quality content for global audiences—something no individual could achieve alone.

Berluti (Italy): Founded in 1895 by Alessandro Berluti, this small bespoke shoemaking operation grew into a global luxury brand. Collaborating closely with artisans, Berluti built its reputation on craftsmanship and quality. By working together, the shoemakers scaled their business, becoming a globally recognized brand while maintaining high craftsmanship standards.

Ecco (Denmark): Ecco started in 1963 as a small shoemaking company, but its close collaboration with shoemakers, designers, and suppliers helped it grow into a global leader. Ecco’s artisans worked together, focusing on innovation and efficiency. This collective contribution and integrated business model—from leather production to retail—enabled Ecco to scale and thrive globally, with over 21,000 employees.

Visionary Leadership For Lasting Impact

Despite the undeniable benefits of working together for the greater good, many prioritize individualism and fiercely guard their freedom. This makes initiating any organization—whether a state, company, Kibbutz, or cooperative—challenging. It requires visionary leaders who can inspire collaboration and shared purpose. These leaders see beyond individual limitations, fostering unity that drives collective prosperity while empowering personal freedom to flourish through innovation, entrepreneurship, and self-fulfillment.

Be A Race Car Driver

This message is for leaders, stakeholders, and decision-makers in the agro sector of emerging economies (though it applies equally to any industry, including developed economies).

Imagine you're driving a Formula 1 racing car. To win, you must push the accelerator to its limits. The best drivers know how to maximize speed without losing control—this makes them champions, bringing home more income, fame, and glory for themselves and the team.

In society, the equivalent of that accelerator pedal is the level of ***mission-oriented togetherness***—collaboration, cooperation, and integration aligned with a shared mission. In every successful organization, from small start-ups to large companies, workers come together with a clear mission in mind. When that mission is unclear, even the best teamwork yields suboptimal results. The more you "push" the pedal of *mission-oriented togetherness*, the faster and more significant your victory will be, reflected in your prosperity—higher incomes, improved livelihoods, and greater happiness.

But here's the warning: Just like in racing, pushing the accelerator alone isn't enough. You must also navigate the track, adapt to conditions, understand your competitors, and know yourself and your team well to cross the finish line as a winner.

Similarly, fostering prosperity requires more than just pressing the "togetherness" pedal. History has shown that even when togetherness is pushed hard, as in North Korea, if it's done against the will of the people, it can lead to deeper poverty instead of prosperity. That's why combining professional expertise and skilled guidance with our efforts to promote prosperity through a willingness to work together is essential.

On the other hand, positive examples of mission-oriented togetherness abound. The Kibbutz movement and companies like Mondragon Corporation show how people, by choice, can come together for a shared mission and build lasting prosperity. Their success stories highlight how communities and organizations flourish when people are not only willing but eager to collaborate and contribute to something larger than themselves.

Yes, there are risks in pushing the togetherness pedal, which may cause you to hesitate—perhaps out of fear of overwhelming smallholders or other key stakeholders. But understand this: by holding back, you condemn those you aim to help to a future of continued poverty, mediocrity, or even regression. Caution might feel safer, but leadership aimed at creating long-term strategic impact requires bold choices. These decisions may be unpopular and challenging to gain support in the short term, but they are essential for achieving long-term growth and prosperity.

Now that you know what it takes to create sustainable prosperity, it's time to act. Make the necessary changes to increase *mission-oriented togetherness*, and don't let the illusion of false "freedom" keep people trapped in eternal cycles of poverty and suffering.

TAKEAWAY MESSAGES

- **Mission-oriented togetherness** is the foundation of lasting prosperity.
- **Willingness to collaborate** paves the road to shared success.
- **Collaboration requires sacrificing** some individual freedom.

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More on the October 7th genocide in South Israel:

Humanity is one organism

Videos - The October 7 genocide

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Here are ways you can work with me to help your rural communities step forward to shift from poverty into ongoing prosperity:

* **Nova Kibbutz and consultancy** on rural communities' models.

* **Local & National programs related to agro-produce export models - Dream Valley** global vertical value and supply chain business model and concept connects (a) input suppliers with farmers in developing economies and (b) those farmers with consumers in premium markets.

* **Crop protection: Biofeed**, an eco-friendly zero-spray control technology and protocol.

If you got to here, read this column, and enjoyed it, please be nice to your friends, share it with them, or help them Subscribe.

"Mental and Economic Freedom Are Interconnected."

See you soon,

Nimrod

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P.S.

If you missed it, here is a link to last week's blog, "*The Invisible Bonds of Life*".

P.P.S.

Dream Valley is a field-proven disruptive business model based on the successful Israeli Model.

You can follow me on LinkedIn, YouTube, and Facebook.

*This article addresses general phenomena. The mention of a country/continent is used for illustration purposes only.