

Baptised by a Tyre

Balasubramanya Ramaswamy narrates how a flat tyre taught him about overcoming a mental block

I don't know why my car makes its presence felt every now and then. 'Don't take me for granted', it seems to say, 'just because I have served you well for 11 years.' And guess what? My Toyota Corolla reminded me of this fact yet again, on the eve of *Ayudha Pooja*.

As I was leaving the JW Marriot Hotel near UB City, a smiling valet handed me the keys and said, 'Have a good day.' I wished him back, but my mind was pre-occupied with all the statistics that currency expert Hareesh Desai had thrown at IMA's

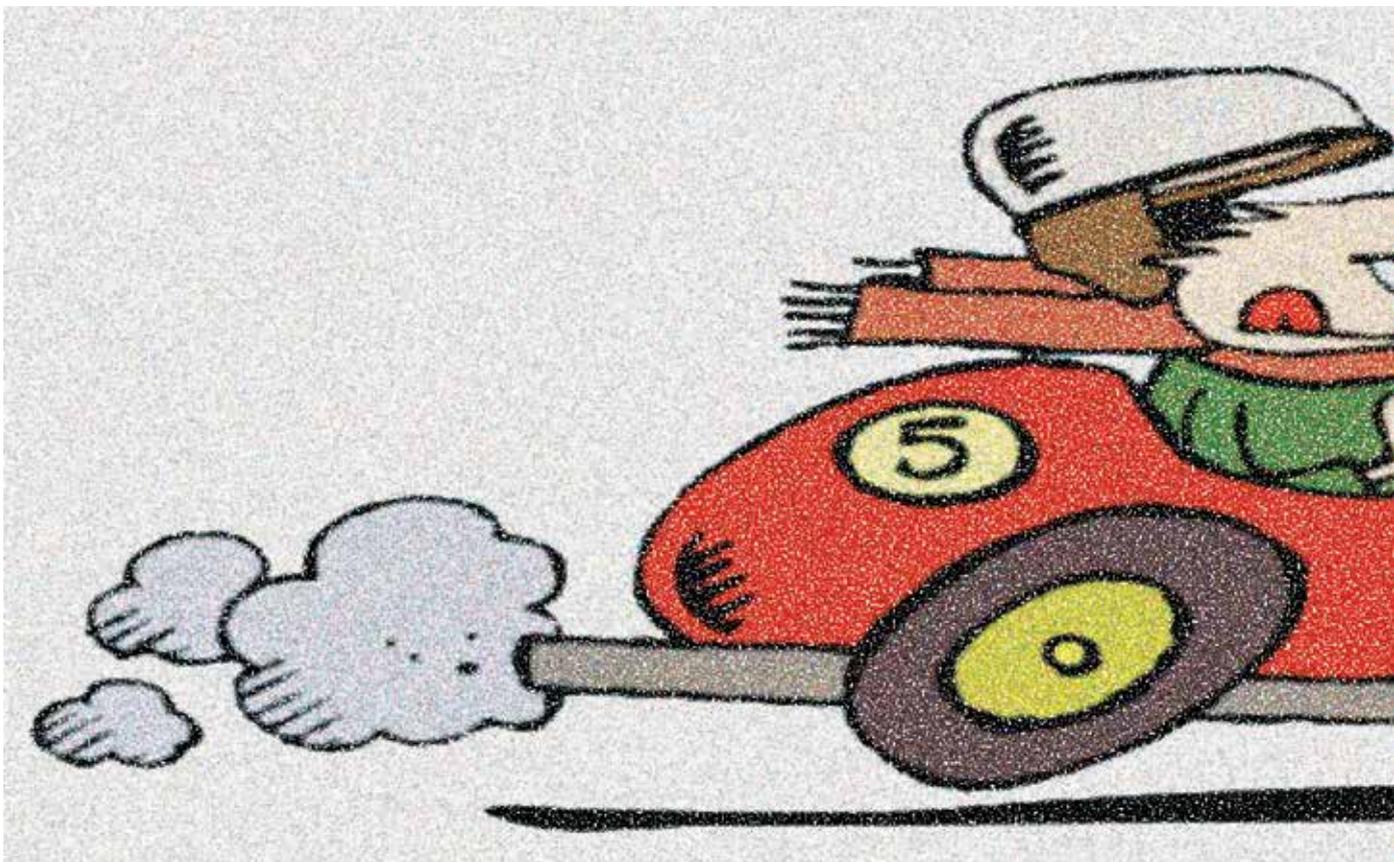
My steering wheel was trying to tell me something, but my mind was elsewhere, even ignoring gestures from passing vehicles



CFO audience that morning. I was trying to figure out in my head what

exactly is a fiscal deficit or a trade deficit – and what does that possibly have to do with FX movements? My mind went into rewind mode as I tried to job back memories of fundamental economics, which I had studied many years ago, even as my favourite singer, Arijith Singh, was playing on the radio. In all of this, I failed to notice another 'deficit' that was gradually growing: the deficit of air in my car tyre!

My steering wheel was trying to tell me something, but my mind was delighted that it had cracked the fiscal deficit and trade deficit



confusion. I even ignored the two or three subtle gestures I got from passing vehicles, pointing to the tyre.

By the time I realized I had a flat tyre, I was nearing Domlur. I pulled the car into one a by-lane and got out, looking like a confused squirrel on the wall, not knowing what to do. I asked a few people around for directions to the nearest 'puncture shop'. Someone who understood Kannada said, 'Theriyadu.'

Across the road was a vehicle with the famous 'Auto Raja' picture of Shankar Nag on the side. The driver was looking in my direction, scanning me with keen interest. What would I do now? A few minutes later, he crossed over and said, 'Sir, thumba easy, Sir. You can change the tyre yourself.'

I couldn't possibly tell him that I had never changed a tyre in my life, so I pretended to be a 'know-it-all' and started pulling out the Jack. He smiled and said, 'Sir, first move the

Life throws challenges at you that seem impossible to overcome, and we tend to shy away. Often, though, these are only mental blocks



car to flat ground, and then put Jack.' I did that immediately, in all earnest.

While I was thinking about my next step, the driver, seeing the way I was dressed, sensed my hesitation. He immediately spread a thick cloth by the side of the car, next to the wheel. I felt happy and relieved. Oh, thank god, he is going to change it for me, I thought. Instead, I was

shocked to hear him say, 'Sir, lean down and put the Jack. Thumba easy, Sir.'

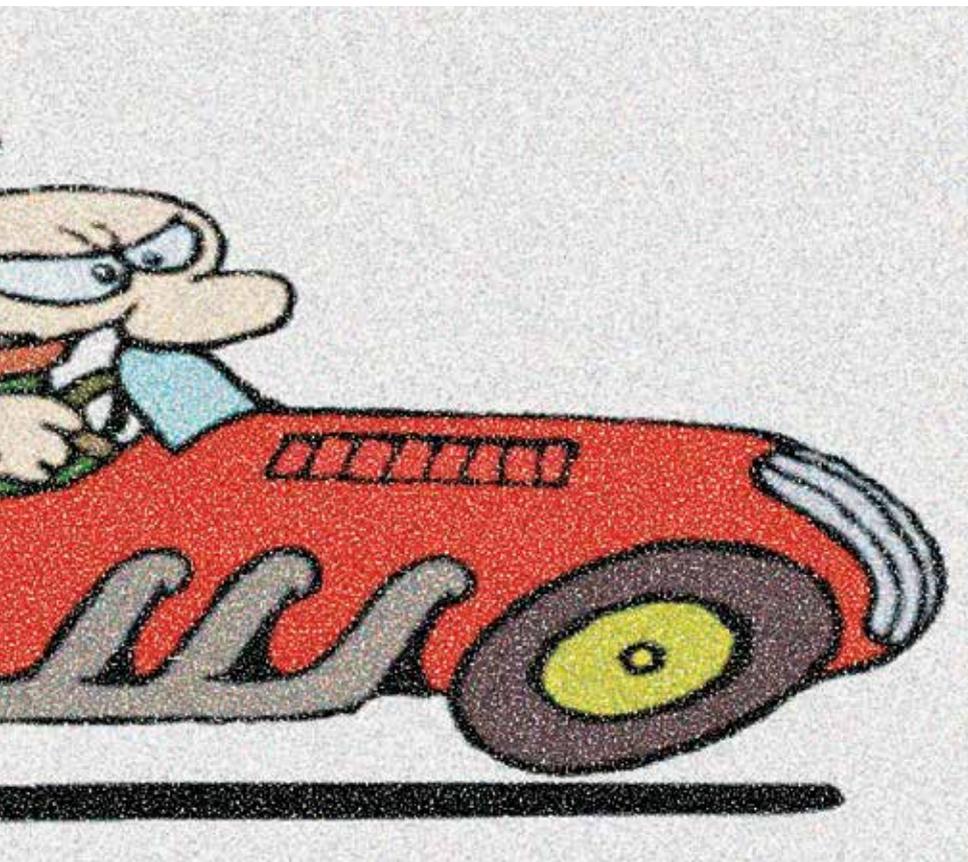
There was something in his voice and command over me that made me faithfully follow his instructions. The bending and movements were easy, thanks to my morning yoga!

Having placed the Jack in the right place, I needed to remove the tyre. Again, the Shankar Nag fan looked at me, and with a smile said, 'Sir, your weight is enough, you just need to touch the spanner, the bolts will jump off.' Panting and puffing, I successfully removed the old tyre in a few minutes. The rest of the job was easy, and I was soon dusting my hands, having changed a tyre for the first time in 22 years of car driving. Wow! What a way to learn on the job!

My chest was up few inches: I had indeed been baptised by the tyre that day. As I turned to leave, a cycle-borne *Chai-Wallah* arrived, and my new guide Murthy and I ordered kadak chai. 'Good job, Sir,' he gushed, 'starting *kastha ansuthey*, try *madbeku*, Sir. *Thumba* easy.'

I thanked him and headed to EGL. I called Charu, my wife, and broke the news to her, but she was shocked. It will take some more convincing for her to believe what I had done.

Often, life throws challenges at you that seem impossible to overcome. We tend to shy away, or think ourselves incapable. It can happen anytime – while learning to swim, bungee-jumping the first time, or trying out a new skill or job. The mind tells you that you can never do it, but the truth is that, unless you try, how do you know you cannot do it? It's a mental block. This is the and most important step, but in some cases, you will need an 'auto driver' to guide you forward. ■



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