

# What killed Ranjan Das and Lessons for Corporate India



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A month ago, many of us heard about the sad demise of Ranjan Das from Bandra, Mumbai. Ranjan, just 42 years of age, was the CEO of SAP-Indian Subcontinent, the youngest CEO of an MNC in India. He was very active in sports, was a fitness freak and a marathon runner. It was common to see him run on Bandra's Carter Road. Just after Diwali, on 21st Oct, he returned home from his gym after a workout, collapsed with a massive heart attack and died. He is survived by his wife and two very young kids. It was certainly a wake-up call for corporate India. However, it was even more disastrous for runners amongst us. Since Ranjan was an avid marathoner (in Feb 09, he ran Chennai Marathon at the same time some of us were running Pondicherry Marathon 180 km away), the question came as to why an exceptionally active, athletic person succumb to heart attack at 42 years of age.

## WAS IT THE STRESS?

A couple of you called me asking about the reasons. While Ranjan had mentioned that he faced a lot of stress, that is a common element in most of our lives. We used to think that by being fit, one can conquer the bad effects of stress. So I doubted if the cause was stress.

## THE REAL REASON

However, everyone missed out a small line in the reports that Ranjan used to make do with 4-5 hours of sleep. This is an earlier interview of Ranjan on NDTV in the programme 'Boss' Day Out':

<http://connect.in.com/ranjan-das/play-video-boss-day-out-ranjan-das-of-sap-india-229111-807ecfcf1ad966036c289b3ba6c376f2530d7484.html>  
Here he himself admits that he would love to

get more sleep (and that he was not proud of his ability to manage without sleep, contrary to what others extolled).

## THE EVIDENCE

Last week, I was working with a well-known cardiologist on the subject of 'Heart Disease caused by Lack of Sleep'. While I cannot share the video nor the slides because of confidentiality reasons, I have distilled the key points below in the hope it will save some of our lives.

## SOME EXCERPTS

- Short sleep duration (<5 or 5-6 hours) increased risk for high BP by 350% to 500% compared to those who slept longer than 6 hours per night. Paper published in 2009. As you know, high BP kills.
- Young people (25-49 years of age) are twice as likely to get high BP if they sleep less. Paper published in 2006.
- Individuals who slept less than 5 hours a night had a 3-fold increased risk of heart attacks. Paper published in 1999.
- Complete and partial lack of sleep increased the blood concentrations of High sensitivity C-Reactive Protein (hs-cRP), the strongest predictor of heart attacks. Even after getting adequate sleep later, the levels stayed high!!
- Just one night of sleep loss increases very toxic substances in body such as Interleukin-6 (IL-6), Tumour Necrosis Factor-Alpha (TNF-alpha) and C-reactive protein (cRP). They increase risks of many medical conditions, including cancer, arthritis and heart disease. Paper published in 2004.
- Sleeping for 5 hours per night leads to 39% increase in heart disease. Sleeping for 6 hours per night leads to 18% increase in heart

disease. Paper published in 2006.

**IDEAL SLEEP**

For lack of space, I cannot explain here the ideal sleep architecture. But in brief, sleep is composed of two stages: REM (Rapid Eye Movement) and non-REM. The former helps in mental consolidation while the latter helps in physical repair and rebuilding. During the night, you alternate between REM and non-REM stages 4-5 times.

The earlier part of sleep is mostly non-REM. During that period, your pituitary gland releases growth hormones that repair your body. The latter part of sleep is more and more REM type. For you to be mentally alert during the day, the latter part of sleep is more important. No wonder when you wake up with an alarm clock after 5-

**Epworth Sleepiness Scale**

Use the following scale to choose the most appropriate number for each situation:

- 0 = would never doze or sleep.
- 1 = slight chance of dozing or sleeping
- 2 = moderate chance of dozing or sleeping
- 3 = high chance of dozing or sleeping

Print out this test, fill in your answers and see where you stand.

Situation	Chance of Dozing or Sleeping
Sitting and reading	_____
Watching TV	_____
Sitting inactive in a public place	_____
Being a passenger in a motor vehicle for an hour or more	_____
Lying down in the afternoon	_____
Sitting and talking to someone	_____
Sitting quietly after lunch (no alcohol)	_____
Stopped for a few minutes in traffic while driving	_____
<b>Total score (add the scores up)</b> (This is your Epworth score)	_____

6 hours of sleep, you are mentally irritable throughout the day (lack of REM sleep). And if you have slept for less than 5 hours, your body is in a complete physical mess (lack of non-REM sleep), you are tired throughout the day, moving like a zombie and your immunity is way down (I've been there, done that L)

Finally, as long-distance runners, you need an hour of extra sleep to repair the running related damage.

If you want to know if you are getting adequate sleep, take Epworth Sleepiness Test below.

**INTERPRETATION**

Score of 0-9 is considered normal while 10 and above abnormal. Many a times, I have clocked 21 out of the maximum possible 24, the only saving grace being the last situation, since I don't

like to drive (maybe, I should ask my driver to answer that line!)

**IN CONCLUSION:**

Barring stress control, Ranjan Das did everything right: eating proper food, exercising (marathoning!), maintaining proper weight. But he missed getting proper and adequate sleep, minimum 7 hours. In my opinion, that killed him.

If you are not getting enough sleep (7 hours), you are playing with fire, even if you have low stress.

I always took pride in my ability to work 50 hours at a stretch whenever the situation warranted. But I was so spooked after seeing the scientific evidence last week that since Saturday night, I ensure I do not even set the alarm clock under 7 hours. Now, that is a nice excuse to get some more sleep.

Unfortunately, Ranjan Das is not alone when it comes to missing sleep. Many of us are doing exactly the same, perhaps out of ignorance. If this article can save even one young life, I would be the happiest person on earth.

# Dietism-n-Nutritionism -The Global Medical Hoax

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I would rather have  
Bacon, and, beer  
In a mood of cheer  
Than have health-food  
With all nutritional details  
With that sense of fear.  
Gourmet Anonymous

Alex Comfort, the pioneer sex-guru, was a biologist. He, witnessing the modern medical scene, penned a miniclassic *The Anxiety Makers*, subtitling it: *Anxiety-making, the curious preoccupation of the medical profession*. Antia, noted gastroenterologist - author prefaced one of his books by generalizing that our ancestors, preModern-Medicine, knew a lot better than all the current nutritionists of the world put together. Dietary fads are the gifts of ostensibly modern medicine that arrived to serve as killjoy anxiety-maker to make each morsel a menace and each sip as sinful.

The 7<sup>th</sup> edition of *Oxford Handbook of Clinical Medicine* devotes a large para on diet to conclude that *The only ideal diet is the one that you enjoy, here and now*. Long ago, the *BMJ* editorialized: The End of the Diet Era. No link has been established between cholesterol-n-CAD, coffee-n-cancer, chilies-n-peptic ulcer. A Russian, circa 1940, overfed rabbits with oil to find aorta sported by lipid-lumps, and the whole cholesterol-industry of diet and drugs was born, now assuming profits that are just sky-high. The 1995, 34<sup>th</sup> edition of *Current Medical Diagnosis and Treatment*, launches the chapter with a bomb: "A major problem for clinicians is that current therapies for high blood cholesterol do not reduce total mortality, in part because their use has been associated with an unexplained increase in deaths from non-

cardiovascular causes." Then, it clearly asserts: "There is no 'normal' range for serum lipids." Most chastising, it generalizes: "As with most primary prevention interventions, however. Large number of healthy patients (*sic*) need to be treated to prevent a single event; for cholesterol lowering, it may be necessary to treatment (*sic*) more than 600 patients (*sic* again) for several years to prevent a single coronary death or five or six nonfatal coronary events." Translated into figures taking that "many" as just 6 years, 3 million meals will have to be gobbled tasteless to prevent an event that in any case occur jolly well on its own. The very next - 1996 - edition of this 1500 page tome has all the above data eliminated sans any explanation or apology. These days, all of lay journalese and much of medical journalese and textage are penned by the PR departments of multinationals. Truth has been sent into permanent exile and travesty of science is ruling the roost.

Clinicians, of whichever pathy, to please note that it's food that turns into the fabric of the patient, and never any drug, which mostly the human body politique treats as Osama Bin Laden. The *paun-bhajji* of *Khau-Galli* is superior to anyof the costliest, latest drugs, The brain *must* burn glucose all the time, and the heart, *must*, all the time burn glucose and fat - the two targeted items that the learned doctors deprive their patients of.

The ideal lipid-profile has been set and reset *n* times to suit the drugs and to scare the people. It's a global scandal that our future generations will laugh at, for the gullibility of the common people and the willful thuggary of the medical establishment. While the globalized Framingham study on the relationship of lipid-n-CAD was going

on a 90 year-old Longshoreman in Scandinavia, in the pink of health, revealed his normal diet to be a mere 30 eggs a day. His lipid-profile refused to oblige medical dogma. This was enough to puncture the lipid-balloon, but the industry has plugged the leak so that statins continue to ravage human bodies to usher in baldness, nerve palsies, hormonal deficiencies, and Alzheimer's disease, and of course death.

Medical men rarely put forth the fact that it's not what we eat that matters but what eats/gnaws us from within - fear, healthism, discontent, joylessness. It's not important *what* you eat or drink, but *how*, in what mood of prayer and gratitude, perceiving each morsel God incarnate, that has the generosity to turn itself into the very you. It's *Shiva* becoming *Jiva*, thereby establishing, at every movement of your jaw and every twist of your tongue, the Vedantic Unity of *Shiva* and *Jiva*. EAT also means Entertain/Exercise All Teeth. The time-honoured tradition of *Prasadam* at the smallest temple is to gently remind you that a banana piece or some puffed rice in your hand is *the real God*, the so-called temple and all its trappings being mostly a competitive show-off. A WHO survey of the Happiness Quotient placed Bangladesh right on top - poor but illiterate enough not to worry about the latest dietary scare.

One of us was called to see a *Muni*. The reformist in him had the better of the encounter. "What have you done?" "Regarding what, *Maharaj*?" "Your

*Atma*." "Why should I worry over my *Atma*? In case I will go to hell, I will have the company of Mehmood or like." "What have you given up?" "*Maharaj*, please don't make me virtuous, for beer, whisky, gin, rum and tobacco are pure veg, and milk is pure non-veg." The end of the conversation was palpably sour - for the reformist.

No power-animal longs for any "balanced" diet, nor even varied one. Its mere grass that gives to the rhino its massive hulk and awesome power. All Life Is Equally Nutritive. This is an ALIEN idea, but damn well true. The modern man has no spontaneity. He must see the label to determine how much sodium or saccharine is herein. As a comical parody of this labelism, you see all "Bisleri" bottles carrying the statutory data of Protein - 0, Fat - 0, Sugar - 0, Calcium - 0. What have we come to?

Enjoy every morsel, for 70% of the humanity knows not when the next meal would come. Eat slowly, talk to your guest-food, calmly, contentedly, and meditate over the first stanza of *Ishopanishad*: Abjure, and then, enjoy - *Tyen taktena bhunjithahaa*. Even Bill Gates or Mukesh Ambani make no grain of rice or a drop of water. Both are for them, but do not belong to them. Thus learn never to waste food or water, thus not depriving a next human's access to that divinity. The rich overeat, overwaste food, so noticeable in the vulgarity of Indian marriages.

At a dinner party, several of the guests were arguing whether men or women were more trustworthy. "No woman," said one man, scornfully, "can keep a secret."

"I don't know about that," huffily answered a woman guest. "I have kept my age a secret since I was twenty-one." "You'll let it out some day," the man insisted.

"I hardly think so!" responded the lady. "When a woman has kept a secret for twenty-seven years, she can keep it forever."

A man told his doctor that he wasn't able to do all the things around the house that he used to do. When the exam was complete, he said, "Now, Doc, I can take it. Tell me in plain English what is wrong with me."

"Well, in plain English," the doctor said, "you're just lazy."

"Okay," said the man. "Now give me the medical term so I can tell my wife."

