

The many new social contradictions emerging in our society distress me no end. Whenever I try to envision the future of India, a frightening picture of a chaotic society in which the institution of family has been shattered to pieces, terrifies me.

In many cities, day care centres for children of women employed outside the house are sprouting like mushrooms. It is only women who look after the children in these day care centres. Thus, looking after other women's children becomes a paid job, a profession. By contrast, looking after one's own children is a thankless, unrecognised, and round-the-clock drudgery whereby the services of housewives are taken for granted! The sooner our society starts giving recognition to housewives, the better it would be.

In cities, especially in the big metros, there is a lot of talk about the problems of the aged. School children go from door to door asking for donations for organisations supposed to be looking after the aged. I wonder how many of these children who ask for donations in the name of the elderly and their parents, and those people who donate money for this cause, feel really concerned about, or have time for their own grandparents and parents. It is fashionable to donate money for the old; but to care for and look after one's own aged parents is seen as a nuisance.

Today, there is a proliferation of schools and colleges and of coaching classes, but the standard of education is deteriorating day by day. In fact, there seems to be an inverse relation between the number of educational institutions and the standard of education. Similarly, the number of religious *gurus* and *matajis* and *satsangs* is growing exponentially, but there is a sharp decline in morality in the day to day life of people.

From the Mundane to the Sublime

OLakshmi Bhargava

The rise of selfishness in the guise of individualism is very disturbing. The individual wants more and more freedom, more and more rights and privileges, but fewer and fewer duties and obligations towards family, towards the society and towards the country. Urban people these days have neither the time nor the inclination to do things for their immediate family, their children or their parents, let alone the extended family. It is so convenient to be unencumbered and not to have to bother about anyone' except oneself. Nothing like it when one is young, healthy and able to do things for oneself. But what about the fag end of life, the twilight years? This is the stage when one finds that one is neither physically nor emotionally self-sufficient and one begins to need others—but others are either not around or just not available! It is at this stage that their individualism backfires on them, when the family and the society get even with the individual.

I dream of a symbiotic relationship between the individual, the family and the society— whereby each is sustained and nurtured by the other two.

I dream of a world where people are aware not only of their rights but of their duties as well. I dream of:

a) Spic and span hospitals where doctors are true to the Hippocratic oath and nurses treat the patients

with consideration and not with indifference.

- b) Schools and colleges cease to be political arenas, and where teachers impart the right values and attitudes to their students, bring out the best in them, and thus earn the respect of their students, instead of demanding it as their birth-right.
- c) A political system which will prevent our political leaders from fleecing the public and which will force them to pay their taxes and bills.
- d) A miracle which will cleanse this country's *rajniti* (polity) of the sickening, sinful and all-engulfing *aniti* (evil policies).
- e) A world where government servants will reach their offices on time, will stay in their seats instead of being perpetually in 'meetings' and will be accessible to the public, will talk to the public politely and discharge their duties without expecting and demanding bribes.
- f) The time when political parties will be free of criminals.
- g) The time when the police will protect the helpless public instead of being hand in glove with the criminals, and when honest police officers will be allowed to carry out their duties instead of being victimised.
- h) The day bazaars will stock unadulterated, healthy and inexpensive food which the

common man will be able to afford.

- i) The day when essential items of daily consumption which are supposed to be available through government shops at controlled prices will not be siphoned away by unfair and unscrupulous shop-owners to the black market. I feel so angry when my maid returns again and again from these shops empty-handed. The disappointment and dejection on her face is unbearable.
- j) The day when India's airlines will rid themselves of pilots and engineers who blackmail and hold the airlines and passengers to ransom through illegitimate strikes, in spite of drawing fat salaries and still fatter perks.
- k) The day when builders, contractors and engineers will no longer rob and cheat the public

openly and brazenly.

- l) A situation when sports which will be cleansed of party politics and corruption so that budding talent gets a chance to flower, instead of being stifled in its infancy.
- m) A society where children will not be deprived of their innocence and childhood, where the youth has a future to look forward to, where the elderly feel secure and can spend the twilight of their lives in peace.
- n) A world free of discrimination on the basis of race or gender or occupation, where there are equal opportunities for all and at all levels.
- o) A world where there is no exploitation of one country by another, of one class by another class or of an individual by

another; where religions bring out the best in people, instead of becoming an excuse for cruel and bloody conflicts; where the establishment does not persecute thinkers who dare to be original and different and people finally realise the oneness of all humankind and our symbiotic relationship with nature.

- p) The day when scientists the world over will get together to combat drought, famine, floods and epidemics, instead of producing weapons of mass destruction.

My dreams and my vision may appear naive and Utopian. But unless dreams are dreamt, how will they ever come true?

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