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**The face of a nation**

“Finding the occasional straw of truth awash in a great ocean of confusion and bamboozle requires intelligence, vigilance, dedication and courage. But if we don’t practice these tough habits of thought, we cannot hope to solve the truly serious problems that face us – and we risk becoming a nation of suckers, up for grabs by the next charlatan who comes along.”– Carl Sagan

As I sat down to write this piece, I was pushed back in time to days when I was younger and living in an age when values were deeply rooted. By and large, people lived by an ethical system in whatever they ventured into. Not only that there is no trace of that bond in the current times, one frequently finds people hanging by the most tenuous of links connecting them with what one may still call human.

Merely acknowledging the reality is a source of pain. Looking around, one beholds unceasing activity spanning a variety of dimensions, but not one is guided by a charter signifying espousal of truth. We live in an age where blatant lies pass for political statements; where foul is classified as strategy and obnoxious as the right of response; where the hands of the poor are stretched further in supplication, but those of the rich are held back; where justice for the powerful and the enfeebled comes from two different books of law; where the inhumanity of the mighty escapes description and refuge for the afflicted bears no address. We live in a world denuded of care, empathy and compassion. It is a world engulfed in dark with not a shade of light on the horizon.

Seeing the landing on Mars, one starts delving into the prospect of looking for another world and another species. But, if at all, that possibility resides in the lap of a distant future – and it is the present that we are occupied with. It is here that we have to create a more just and a more equitable world.

Any process of change begins with the stock of people and the character they exhibit under adverse conditions. If they resign to the demands of their needs and adapt to the exigencies of the times, the very prospect of improvement may disappear. That is virtually the condition we have regressed to. There is a long list of reasons which has precipitated this plunge. Suffice to say that the state has failed abysmally in fulfilling its contract onto its people. So, alongside the essential loss of hope, people have been forced to embrace their fate in a pit of depravity. With time, their fall has encompassed harrowing proportions across a multidimensional spectrum.

What we see around dashes our hope even further. We seem to be residing in a space which cannot be defined by any of the traditional yardsticks that we are accustomed to using. Shorn of any principles, it is a bottomless abyss we seem to be sliding into with no speck of light to guide us out. Should that be accepted as our fate, or is there still something that can be done to deter such an eventuality?

Whenever it is initiated, a change would begin with the drafting of a moral code to make a clear distinction between what is right and what is not. There should be a line dividing the two, with one path to be pursued and the other spurned. In the event this line is blurred, the process of degradation would inevitably set in which would pick in speed with the momentum of the fall. That is what we have been experiencing for decades now. Today, a high level of putridity symbolises our decision-making options. There is hardly an effort to sift the right from the false. In fact, there is a conscious effort to merge the two to benefit those who have been preaching the gospel of deception and distortion.

This morbid spectacle has warped the face of the nation and it has become difficult to see what it actually stands with and what it disapproves. In the sway of times, everything is kosher, be it on the right side of the divide or the wrong. Accelerating further along this path would hasten our plunge into the doomsday syndrome.

It is time to look inward and view in earnest what is being perpetrated. There is much that is untrue, but there is also much that is right. Rejecting the former is the starting effort to initiate this process of change. One must recognise the mafias, cartels and their operators which are blocking the path to genuine progress. Not only should they be singled out, they should be shamed and shunned so that avenues of change can open up.

It requires resolve, it requires will power, it requires an indomitable spirit, and it requires an ability to separate right from wrong. Without a strong display of these faculties, there is no way to extricate ourselves from the dark hole.

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