



Lt. General (Retd) Arjun Ray, PVSM, VSM

Heroic Imagination

Dear Friends,

Sustainability is a wide domain and goes well beyond the challenges of climate change, resource sharing, socio-economic equities, poverty, religious fundamentalism, and conflict. Moreover, sustainability is not possible unless we have a positive world view, and the desire to make the world a better place to live in. Everyone of us has a world view that determines our relationships, our decisions, our behavior, and what we want to become in life. We may describe this as wellness. Although there is no accepted definition of wellness, it is popularly associated with one's personal, physical, emotional and spiritual health care. A key element in sustainability is social wellness. Social wellness fosters the values of love, courage, integrity and compassion. Social wellness makes you happy and others happy too. Social wellness makes you a hero, a leader.

Today I recommend a completely new dimension of social wellness by suggesting that, schools and parents should consider developing **heroic imagination** in children. This is an active form of wellness wherein an ordinary individual is personally empowered with the feeling that, I can make a difference in society. You do not have to be a Gandhi, a Mother Teresa, or a Superman to be a hero. Ordinary people who believe they have the power to make a difference are also heroes.

There is a thin line between good and evil, and each one of us faces this problem in class, in school, in family, amongst friends, and within the community. These problems can range from bullying, unfair criticism, teasing, spreading gossips and rumours, to violation of traffic rules, oppression of the under-privileged, cruelty to animals, and destruction of the environment.

We are constantly being reminded by parents and friends, *“Don’t get involved...mind your business...how are you concerned?”* I say to you: Can you turn around and tell them, *“For once you are wrong, because humanity is my business.”*

When a person sees something wrong happening he has three choices. He becomes part of the evil that is happening. Or, he could remain a passive bystander and allow the situation to drift into chaos. Such a person is also a partner in evil. Alternatively, he could be heroic by intervening and stopping what is happening. To be a hero, stop thinking what will happen to you, and simply act on behalf of other people, the animals and the environment. Listen to the inner voice and follow your conscience.

I would like all of you to imagine that you are **heroes-in-waiting**, just waiting for a situation where:

You will speak up for what is right and have the courage to say *“This is wrong.”*

Or you will say, *“I will do what you are asking me to do, but I do not agree with what you are asking me to do.”* This is intellectual dissent.

A hero has a thousand faces. There are heroes in the battlefield, on the streets, in our homes, in the classrooms. The hero I am talking about is the ordinary person who creates an extraordinary impact.

The hero I am talking about is a role model who inspires others to do good. The hero I have in mind is not someone who is looking good, feeling good and having all the goods. The hero I have in mind is **being good and doing good** to make the world a better place.

This is wellness.

This is heroic imagination.

With warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Arjun Ray". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Lieutenant General (Retd) Arjun Ray, PVSM, VSM
Chief Executive Officer
Indus Trust