



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

The Need of the hour: Vision in School leadership

There has been more than great perturbation in the minds and voices of school leaders as the time of reckoning draws nearer. The recently passed Right to Education Bill is on the way to becoming a reality. In Bangalore at least, something beyond mere apprehension, misgivings or doubts have been voiced about the feasibility of the bill and all formidable changes it will bring in the wake of its implementation.

It would seem that behind all this skepticism, there is an underlying fear of a huge dent in revenue, from the reservations of seats for indigent children. There are also concerns about anticipated disciplinary problems and those of health and hygiene.

How far, we may well ask, have we come from the colonial mentality of the last century? Where have all the visionaries gone who spoke of education being the liberator of ignorance and poverty?

The hard fact is that the concept of Gratitude has been superseded by that of Greed. This is the era of me and mine. In the movie, "Wall Street", Gordon Gekko, one of the biggest stock speculators on Wall Street at the time, explains his philosophy to the young Bud Fox, that "Greed is good". Today the number of believers in this dictum is legion. And this is primarily why we had the great Crash of 2009. The greed for wealth for its own sake, the quest for power and title brought most of the world to its knees, but we never learn, do we!

Schools should be agents of change. The greatest value that should be taught to our children is gratitude. The outcome of this value should be paying back to the underserved, the disadvantaged. In India such people are always near, always around us.

What our 63 years young democracy needs is education, education and more education. Then, and only then, can democracy ensure the minimum freedoms to all. Only then can Equity and Social justice cease to be just high sounding words.

The widening gap in this century is not between those who have money and those who don't. What must be bridged and fast, is the gap between those who have knowledge and those who do not. Attitudes of acceptance, of a willingness to try to lift people up, must be cultivated and transmitted to the new generation of Indians. Only then can we speak of India rising.

Of course there will be problems. Change always brings problems. But progress and prosperity for some, arms them with the tools and attitude to overcome. If we keep vagrant children off the street, will not greater discipline eventually become a way of life in society? If we tackle the health and nutrition of 25% more children in our schools, will we not be building a stronger workforce for the nation?

Let us begin with an attitude of gratitude and move on to an attitude of acceptance, of a willingness to try to lift others up and not just ourselves. Generosity of spirit is founded in a spirit of sacrifice, of doing without, so that all may have some and none go without, be it food, shelter or education. Let us resolve to look at the RTE Bill as contributors and not as detractors; as facilitators and not as nay sayers.

Otherwise the ravaging forces of poverty, illiteracy and Maoism will infiltrate our growing billions and Machiavellian values will reign supreme. It is payback time, if we mean to survive and thrive as a nation.

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 line.

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Chief Executive Officer
Indus Trust