

Tippani on New Year's Day

January 01, 2013

We are at the start of a new year and all of us would certainly be facing new challenges. What is even more significant is the fact that some of our old challenges remain neglected and, therefore, have only become more daunting.

In the closing days of 2012 we have seen a ghastly crime being committed in the capital of the country. But we must not view this shocking action of six citizens of India as an isolated incident or aberration. On the contrary, what has come to the surface is a crime which has perhaps been taking place across the country and on an increasing scale for much too long. We have just been blind to trends which any responsible society would have taken steps to address on a timely basis. Sadly, it required the sacrifice of the life of a young and courageous girl to stir our conscience. Yet, it would be a disservice to her memory if we did not focus on the larger malaise that this heinous crime represents.

The sad reality of the Indian scene, as it is today, clearly demonstrates that we have in existence catastrophic trends, in which is lurking a range of creeping dangers that Indian society has been oblivious of for several decades now. There is widespread criticism of our police, much of which is justified, but the ineffectiveness of our police force is only a part of the decay and rot in many of our institutions. The truth is that if we do not act to arrest this decay and build on the inherent strengths of the Indian people to revitalize our institutions we would not be able to create a dynamic structure that eliminates risk and provides a sense of well-being and security of our people. I am familiar with the work of the National Police Commission which submitted its report in 1980. This was an excellent, even brilliant, exercise which if implemented would have given us a police service matching the demands of the 21st century, but Mrs. Indira Gandhi threw this report in the dustbin because the Commission had been set up by the previous Janata Government which she regarded as her enemy. When will Indians across the political spectrum decide that what is good for India merits a dispassionate bipartisan support? And when is the party in power going to learn that the opposition deserves some respect, and vice versa.

We are at a juncture when India needs a transformative change, or else the catastrophic trends we see in many of our crucial activities will – as the term signifies – certainly result in widespread catastrophe. This would overtake us in our management of the environment, the supply and distribution of foodgrains, the neglect of public versus private transport, the vulgar display of by our rich despite increasing income disparities, the poor quality of education at all levels, failing health care services, even as expensive and high-class medical facilities are mushrooming, and in our water resources which are being depleted even while wastage grows unabated.

Our country urgently needs transformative change in all these sectors; and this in my view defines TERI's mission and the reason for our existence. Many TERI colleagues must have made New Year resolutions, and I hope that you will keep up with them, but may I earnestly request that as far as TERI's activities are concerned, we must redouble our efforts and inject a missionary zeal in all our collective endeavors. That would be a genuine tribute to the courageous girl whose life was snuffed out through a dastardly act, and this would certainly be our Dharma toward the 1.2 billion citizens of India and the rest of the world. Let us not minimize the significance of what we can do, and let us enhance through all our actions what we actually do.

My very best wishes to all of you for a very happy new year replete with satisfaction, joy and a sense of fulfillment!

Source: TERI Intranet