

THEY ALSO SERVE WHO ONLY STAND AND WAIT

In 1976, Richard Dawkins, a British evolutionary biologist, wrote in his book “The Selfish Gene”, ‘If you wish as I do to build a society in which individuals co-operate generously and unselfishly towards a common good, you can expect little help from biological nature.....because we are born selfish’. He considers humans as mere vehicles for a genetic line that is self-seeking. However, those who believe in the possibilities of our evolving through caring nurture into beings that are less and less selfish in nature may be reluctant to endorse Dawkins’ view fully. Adam Curle, a British academic and a Quaker peace activist, in his book, “Education for Liberation” throws an interesting sidelight on this theme when he says, ‘The stronger the urge for acquisitive materialism (read, ‘self-aggrandizement’), the weaker obviously is the awareness of, sensitivity to and compassion for the needs of others. What happens as a result is that the powerful and the wealthy both among nations and among individuals diminish the potential of the weak.’ to satisfy their greed, one might add. But he believes that this system need not be allowed to become completely dominant. Embedded in our nature and our society is the source of the counter system that has the potential to become not only altruistic and empathetic but also co-operative.

It is this unselfish co-operation for the common good that spurred visionaries like Paul William Alexander and his friends to found a movement, some ninety years ago, in the service of Man. We have witnessed how it has over the years drawn like-minded people the world over to follow in their footsteps. Not to be left behind, some seventy years or so ago, we too in India fell in. Leadership then was vested in those with the most ability, not because they solicited for positions but because they could be trusted with their mandate. They threw themselves heart and soul into the spirit of the movement. They paid scant heed to their personal priorities as they set to work to achieve their charitable objectives. If there was a selfish gene in them, it regressed to make way for the cause they espoused. They had, from the word ‘go’, showed great fellowship and goodwill in making a common cause.

Our movement, however, is now facing an identity crisis in India. Of late, it has been exhibiting disturbing signs of the old selfish gene rearing its ugly head to dissipate the hard-earned reputation of the movement for community service over the years. Whereas in the past, the office sought the candidate and not the candidate the office, now we witness the unsavoury spectacle of a no-holds-barred rat race between rival contenders for leadership positions. Bear with me if I pull no punches.

Consequently, it is those without scruples that have stolen a march on others in wresting control of the movement, with indecent haste, by employing unethical means, be it gerrymandering zones of influence with electoral support in mind or throwing crumbs of inducement in the way of their hangers-on. And, once installed, they think nothing of abusing their power to deny preferment for deserving candidates or of spreading canards

about those they perceive as a threat to their positions. To this end, there has even been impersonation in cyberspace to send bogus messages.

Yet it is not as if they are just one, single cohesive group forming a cabal, vying to outsmart the rest. In fact, there are several factions pulling in different directions instead of unitedly putting their shoulders to the wheel of 'dharma' that they are pledged to do as Y's Men and Women. Such persons have one thing in common; they always have eye to the main chance even as they breathlessly wait for the day they can wallow in the perks of their positions and embark on junkets paid for from the common kitty, with hospitality and other freebies thrown in. According to local grapevine, we have even had some worthies among them who have not been able to balance their ledgers before demitting office. It is, however, difficult to fathom why when such malfeasance comes to light, often, the hierarchy either finds reasons to give the wrongdoer the benefit of the doubt or sweep it under the carpet. Could it be because we live in a selfish age and, without exception, everybody seems to be asking, 'What's in it for me?'

True, it is not easy to give up one's personal priorities and ambitions, but what of 'vaulting ambition, which overleaps itself and falls on the other', as Shakespeare so elegantly put it? This is what has begun to ail our movement owing, in no small measure, to these carpetbaggers, ready to usurp what is not rightfully theirs. And yet it is a marvel that this ailment has not festered and spread down to the rank and file at the club level, by and large. They are the backroom boys and girls (Men and Menettes) who in their small way toil and moil, without any thought of a reward, to sustain our movement. 'We can do no great things,' said Mother Teresa, 'only small things with great love' or as Wordsworth put it, '...little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love'. Remember the boy with the five loaves and two fish who helped Jesus feed the multitude? He shall for ever remain nameless. And again, And what about the poor widow who cast 'more than they all' with her offering of everything she had in her name, two small copper coins? She too has no name.

In spite of the shenanigans obtaining at certain levels of the movement's pecking order, our clubs continue to be our saving grace. Our Y's men and Menettes for the most part are content to take their place among those who desire to serve the movement and find peace in the thought that they have done their best. In their own self-effacing way, they have unobtrusively worked without seeking the limelight. If honours perchance would come their way in the fullness of time, it would be just reward for their patience and they could with poet Milton say, "They also serve who only stand and wait".

Y'sm Easaw Joseph John,
ASD, Public Relations
Tel: 0469 2664253
Mob: 949505305
Email ID: ammoose2@yahoo.co.in or ammoose@dataone.in

Web: www.memoriesandmusings.com
Y's Men's Club of Maramon, SWIR