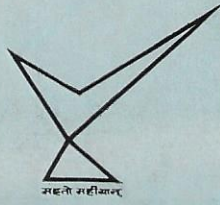


EXCELLENCE NEWS & NOTES

AN OCCASIONAL PUBLICATION OF THE INDIAN CENTRE FOR ENCOURAGING EXCELLENCE



DEMOCRACY AND EXCELLENCE

Democracy will not be a desirable form of Government—much less a covetable one—if it stood for the lowest common denominator in our life. If democracy has first to level down, it should only be to level up. Otherwise, we would have to succumb to and rest content with unrelieved mediocrity. It is sometimes argued that a politically and economically advanced democracy may ensure comfort but not excellence. If this were true, it would imply that while the mundane and material achievements in a democracy may multiply, the spirit withers and the finer values of life decline.

This is not true. The freedom for individual development which democracy offers to all its citizens should lead to a flowering of the spirit. It is only when democracy stresses the demagogic aspects or subordinates talent to commonplaceness that it calls for criticism. In a country like ours with a renowned past, the reminiscences of which are spread throughout the length and breadth of this land, it could be seen that the people have been capable of achieving excellence in many areas. The monuments of unrivalled splendour in architecture and sculptures and the imperishable treasures of thought and imagination in art, literature and philosophy together furnish the measure of our forbears.

Against this backdrop, when we view what is happening in our own time we are apt to be filled with dismay. A sense of triviality as it were overshadows us in all our activities, to such an extent indeed that between the past and the present there stretches a yawning gap. To get reconciled to it is to write ourselves down for all time. Nor is it that there are no voices of protest. Day in and out, in public and in private, we find a rising indignation against triviality articulating itself. Thinking men and women, restless, impatient, lift their voices to plead for a sustained and widespread endeavour to set up higher and nobler objectives in our day-to-day life and in our avocations whatever they be. A conscious striving for excellence and the determination not to come to terms with anything but the best is the prime need of the hour. It is to fulfil this need that the dispersed striving should converge to a point and assume the strength of a movement.

Along with many of our countrymen, we have felt the urgency of the need to uphold a sense of values. During the last two decades of our independence and self rule, so great has been the decline of standards that it is well nigh impossible to hold our heads high with self-respect and national pride in the eyes of the world. One often wonders whether it was this destiny with which we had a

A Message from Dr. SARVAPALLI RADHAKRISHNAN

Whatever work you undertake, it is essential to Aim at high standards; whether we reach perfection or not, we must Aim at it.

यद्यद्भिर्भूतिमत्सत्त्वं श्रीमद्जितमेव वा ।

तत्तदेवावगच्छ त्वं मम तेजोऽशसम्भवम् ॥

GITA: 10:41

tryst and if so whether it was worth our while. No doubt we are too near the situation to analyse it dispassionately. But the questions still persist: why should it be so? Have we lost our moorings? Has freedom come to us as an empty shell? These are disturbing thoughts but we cannot evade them since they arise from the reality which confronts us all around. Thinking people of all ages and shades of opinion make no secret of their frustration.

At the same time we cannot afford to despair. The mettle of our people has proved itself beyond doubt. Within living memory we have had a synthesis of ends and means achieved to attain a national goal. It is all the more baffling, therefore, that a country that could rise as one man to regain its independence should have succumbed to triviality and disintegration within such a brief space of time.

What we need today, in our opinion, first and foremost is the will to rehabilitate ourselves, to define our articles of faith and to do everything we can to scale those summits which we reached more than once in the past. A great many men and women have set high standards in their own spheres of activity and are working hard to preserve them. Some of them are known; some have preferred to shun publicity.

We believe that all efforts for excellence and all achievements need to be pooled together to strengthen our confidence that we have a future just as we had a past of meritorious renown. One should not give up and seek new havens elsewhere

This Centre symbolises our faith in the capabilities of our people and has the sole purpose behind it to locate, encourage and propagate excellence in all walks of life. It has had the backing of a massive body of like-minded people. It embodies what many of us have been thinking about. It hopes to reach out to the growing generations in schools and colleges which are at present seething with an inner turmoil, to take stock with the grown-ups of all that is being done and to make available the quintessence of the experience of some of those who have realised excellence in their own life. It wishes to locate and inspire excellence, wherever it be, to help create a climate conducive to its growth. We invite you to support this Institute for the cause it promotes. It is everybody's cause in the country today, a mission that has to be pursued with the unflagging persistence of missionary zeal.

MAN IN THE MAKING

Man is in the making; but henceforth he must make himself. To that point Nature has led him, out of the primeval slime. She has given him limbs, she has given him brain, she has given him the rudiment of a soul. Now it is for him to make or mar that splendid torso. Let him look no more to her for aid; for it is her will to create one who has the power to create himself. If he fail, she fails; back goes the metal to the pot; and the great process begins anew. If he succeeds, he succeeds alone. His fate is in his own hands.

*from A Modern Symposium :
G. Lowes Dickinson*

ON RAISING OUR LEVELS OF ACCEPTANCE

Why is it that many of the products made in India are shoddy and do not find a ready market abroad?

Why are our city streets in such disrepair?

Why do our students find it hard to get admission to the very best educational institutions abroad?

Why do our University degrees rate so low in international estimation?

Why, in other words, are we a second rate nation?

The answer is short and simple : it is because our levels of acceptance are very low.

In our schools and colleges, in our training institutes and in our industries, teachers and supervisors alike seem to be content with the shoddy and the second rate.

There is no conscious quest for Excellence, for its own sake. There is a throwing up of hands, a deliberate acceptance of declining standards.

"It is a funny thing about life. If you refuse to accept anything but the best, you very often get it," Somerset Maugham said once.

This is demonstrably true.

Poverty and lack of means are often cited as the reasons for the low levels of acceptance. But if lives of great men all remind us, it is that poverty has nothing to do with the second and third rate.

Abraham Lincoln was born poor. He became the greatest President of the United States of America.

The ranks of those who were born poor but reached heights of eminence in all countries and climes are endless,

Those who make excuses for their laziness let excuses rule their lives.

The quest for Excellence has always been carried out despite the gravest disadvantages.

No great accomplishment was ever completed under easy circumstances,

The bigger the challenge, the sharper the response : this has been a truism down the ages.

The great temples of India were not built by men who gave up easily.

Ellora today is a living tribute to that quest for quality that marked our ancestors of another generation.

If the Taj Mahal continues to draw sighs of wonder, they are not sighs for one man's love for a woman, but for one man's unquenchable desire for Excellence.

The world is what we make of it.

The German Economic Miracle was not wrought by men who sat on their haunches. It was the work of men who would accept nothing but the best in whatever they undertook.

They had every valid reason to complain that the war had been lost, that their leaders were to blame and that they were the most hated people in the world.

None of these deterred them from rebuilding their cities from the ruins and starting afresh.

Japan in 1945 was, for all purposes, a nation finished.

Today, the Japanese Economic Miracle is something even greater than the German one.

What the Germans and the Japanese did for themselves, Indians can.

LET US ENCOURAGE

FUNCTIONAL EXCELLENCE

Let us encourage functional excellence in others and in ourselves.

Functional Excellence lies in **how we do**, whatever we do. The barber and the butcher can both practise functional excellence.

The first step to encourage functional excellence is to **respect function**, every function, irrespective of its market value.

What is not respected is not likely to reach excellence level.

This respect for function enables us to notice excellence in discharging that function, but we have to **look for** excellence to notice it.

And when we do notice such excellence, let us **say** we have noticed it, let us spread the good word: let us not feel shy about it. Recognition makes for repetition; recognition makes for still better performance.

Let us recognise functional excellence for the reason it is the graceful thing to do; let us not recognise it with any ulterior motives.

There is functional excellence in the country; and if we consciously and consistently encourage it, we can have more of such excellence, and we can never say: Enough. Never before in history we needed as we do now Excellence in every functional area.

TO EXTEND TOKEN SUPPORT

Those who wish to give token support to what the Centre stands for may subscribe to this occasional publication. Annual subscription Rs. 10. Organisations or individuals can get *bulk* supply of any issue of **Excellence** for distribution at 50 rupees for 100 copies.

THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE series

Talks

by

on

Professor M. G. K. Menon Thursday, 22 Feb.
Director, Tata Institute of
Fundamental Research

Dr. J. W. Airan Thursday, 29 Feb.
Principal, Wilson College

at **SASMIRA AUDITORIUM 7 p. m.**

Dear Fellow Enthusiast :

We have to together produce this occasional publication.

EXCELLENCE is planned to carry news and notes of Excellence interest. The items may relate to Excellence in Action or Potential Excellence; may draw the attention of the reader to an act or fact of excellence, in this country or abroad.

Just as the Editorial Board is looking for such material, you too will be looking for such material. When you do find the material, you would also like to share it with like-minded people. The readers of EXCELLENCE are such like-minded people.

Please do forward to the Centre such items that you have read or seen of Excellence interest.

EXCELLENCE will be an occasional publication since the Editorial Board feels that the publication should not become a routine activity, that the numbers should be issued only when there is sufficient and significant material for publication.

Yours in Excellence
EDITOR

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