

An Indian Utopia

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Since we introduced this column, inviting readers to share their visions of the future, a majority of the contributors have desired and envisaged a perfectly egalitarian world which is free of greed and conflict. Clearly, the utopian tradition is still very important for intellectuals in India — even if it is impossible to achieve — and often self contradictory. In this article, the visions of Marx and of Vedant resonate together in an odd but revealing way. The author, a Delhi-based medical doctor, works for CANSUPPORT, an organization providing support to terminally-ill cancer patients.

-Editor

I read with interest your invitation to the readers to share their visions for the future and to dream real big in the process. I also read the two responses published in issues 117 and 118. Though I believe that we have to be firmly rooted in the present and accept the world as it is in toto, and perform our *karma* as per the guidance of our inner voice, I am taking this opportunity to delve into the unfathomable depths of fantasy land. I will try to dream real big.

My fantasy encompasses the entire world and therefore it envisages a world without boundaries, and individuals as world citizens, or rather, as citizens of the universe. I envision a future in which equality would be so pervasive that inequality would be eliminated, first, from the consciousness of the people and, then, from the dictionaries. By equality. I only mean non-discrimination and not lack of variety, diversity and differences. This would mean that the world's resources would be available to anybody who needs them, as a matter of right. There would be no concept of charity or deprivation. Even if there was a need to accord priorities in the allocation of some scarce resources, it would be easily accorded by consensus, as there would be no

concept of 'I' and 'you', which would have been replaced by a concept of 'we'. The distinction between 'me' and 'you' as benefactors would be replaced by the consciousness of 'us'



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as benefactors. (In fact, 'benefactor' also appears to be the vocabulary of an exploitative social formation—the correct term may be 'co-existent').

In this scheme of things, the term 'us' cannot be confined merely to human beings. It has to necessarily include the entire world of living beings and maybe even the inanimate world. People in this scheme of

things will have as much reverence for 'a speck of dust' as they will have for, let's say, 'an extremely beautiful peacock' or 'the most exalted physician in this universe' or 'the most beautiful woman in this universe' or 'the most talented cricket player in the world.' The prevailing logic would be that 'a speck of dust' is as much a part of the universe as, let's say, 'the most intelligent brain manifested in this universe' and there would neither be any parameters nor any need for comparing the two, for the purpose of assigning to them a hierarchy of importance in our minds. In fact, everything would be perceived as just a part of the continuum that constitutes the whole universe, without separateness.

People will no longer be interested in acquiring material assets or what we popularly understand as 'private property'. Except for a few items of personal use, everything will be commonly shared. (Even sharing conveys an impression of owning, so things would just be there, and human beings would make use of them whenever required, with utmost reverence). People would work in accordance with the talents identified in them and their efforts would naturally gravitate towards working for the welfare of mankind and the



whole universe. In such a process not only would the deadwood be cleared from society but the following changes would also inevitably follow:

- No criminals, police, security systems, courts, prisons, legislations and legislatures. There will only be meetings to decide the course of action in case of a deadlock. Decisions will be taken by consensus, and rarely by a majority vote, without trampling upon any person's ego, because there will be no individual, fragmented egos.

- No armed forces, as there will be no boundaries to defend or nations to be conquered, and no intelligence service as there will be no military secrets.

- No profit motive and all its associated ills, like production of unsafe, superfluous products; no patenting, which is based on the absurd premise, even by the present stage of development of civilization, that the benefits of any invention should go to the individual who has made the invention or discovery, or the institution which has financed the research. Use of unfair and harmful methods of production, occupational hazards, environmentally detrimental methods of production,

silly and outrageous advertising, unhealthy competition, marketing and salesmanship, all these will be given a decent burial.

- No banks, financial institutions, no stock markets, as there will no longer be any need for money. All the resources will be computed as they are and there will be no real need to convert any resource, such as cement or steel or human resources, into money. However, there may still be a need for money as a symbolic denominator, for the purpose of choosing between two or more proposals.

- No sensationalism in reporting. The whole culture of competitive reporting, to grab the maximum number of readers, will disappear.

- The whole nature of research, which today is oriented towards making maximum profits, will be replaced by the motivation to unravel the truth and nothing but the truth.

- There will be no reason to persist with the institutions and practices needed to subjugate women, as there will be no private property, no dowry and inheritance, no preference for sons or daughters, no need to discriminate between fertile, infertile, married, single, divorced,

widowed, much married, never married, or any other status of people of either sex.

Now we shall also visualize what would be different from the contemporary state of affairs.

- Every person will retain a natural, childlike innocence, which includes the natural tendency to be in a blissful state of being. It will not be dissipated by any need to grow up as a worldly-wise person. The world would cease to be perceived as a threatening place, where one has to compete with fellow human beings: to secure the best grade in an exam., or to work very hard to build up a career, or to grab the maximum share of resources that are apparently scarce. Instead, the world would be perceived as a playground, of the type that very young children play in. People will be in touch with real wealth, that is, love, sympathy, compassion and joy, the wealth which resides within each one of us.

- People will be very enthusiastic and industrious and their efforts will be directed towards helping others. They will realize that the path to real happiness lies in working for others. In the process they will be served as a part of this

chain reaction. All the efforts will be directed towards the usefulness of the products. In the absence of commercial motives, there will be no need to create artificial demands. What will propel people to work will not be personal incentives or insecurities but a genuine and natural desire to grow, develop and excel. Since all the rewards will be internal, there will be no efforts wasted in pleasing or placating others.

□ Since there will be no reason for people to be stressed out, sickness would be reduced in the population. Some people think that all diseases have their origins in the mind or, at the very least, that most diseases can be tackled with a positive attitude. If this view is correct, then it can be assumed that society's load of disease will be much less than it is today. Also, medical facilities will be genuinely available to all and the quality of care will be of a much higher standard.

The care-givers will have a genuine interest in helping others and will excel in that art in the absence of distractions like the commercialization of medicine, the pressure from pharmaceutical firms, sickening hierarchy in medical institutions and absolute lack of co-ordination, not only within institutions but also between institutions of the same system of medicine. Instead, newer methods of disease prevention will first be discovered and then made available and accepted by the people, so that disease prevention will become the central focus of the attention of caregivers and people in general. Whatever is genuine in any system of healing will be accepted and all systems will get amalgamated to form one 'system of healing'.

□ Since so many people will be relieved from unnecessary positions in the army, police, marketing firms, and so on, and so little effort will be

required to produce the basic necessities of life, the chief engagement of the people will be in the creation of beauty and aesthetics in this already beautiful universe. Sports, arts, science, architecture and recreation will achieve unimaginable heights.

There will also be a certain loss in the process, like the loss of presently existing cultures and traditions, which will probably become part of our archives, prepared by honest scholars.

It may sound too utopian. But then there is nothing really wrong in the 'fantasy' and searching for the path to the realization of such a fantasy, especially if it is most likely going to be the path of spiritual enlightenment, towards the realization that there is no real separateness between 'me', 'you' and 'them' and, above all, the realization of 'love' 'joy' 'happiness' 'compassion' 'sympathy' 'innocence' and 'enthusiasm'. □

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