Article FAMILY-8

THE CHANGING VALUES

■ by D. P. Sabharwal

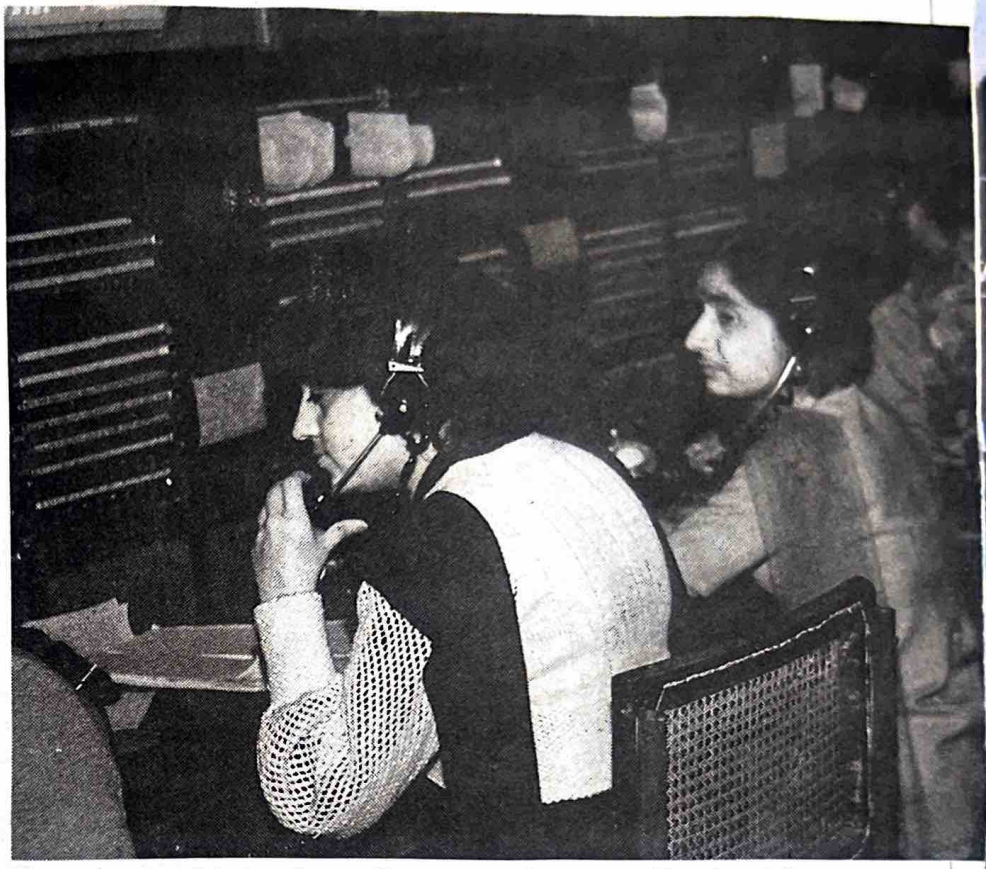
CASE1: "The toll in the sura tragedy has mounted to 184 and another 114 continue to battle for life in 7 city hospitals," says a press report. The report further states: "manufacturers used poisonous methyl alcohol as it was cheaper. In fact, they reportedly directed the workers to go ahead with the preparation even when the workers, having found something wrong with the brew, informed the manager who had the work stopped the previous evening."

No doubt, a case has been registered against the culprits charging them with "culpable homicide not amounting to murder," it will take a long time for the court to arrive at the conclusion. But one thing is very clear even at this stage. The whole tragedy occurred because a few individuals were hell-bent on making a fast buck.

Case 2: "An Army officer was nabbed while coming out of the Pakistan Embassy. He had been under watch and was being trailed for the last 3 months. Some secret and incriminating documents were later recovered from his residence." When questioned by the Central Bureau of Investigation officials, he admitted having passed certain classified papers to the embassy personnel."

Now if you try to think as to why an army officer, who had been donning the uniform for the last 16 years, passed his country's secrets to an enemy, the only possible reason that comes to mind instantly is "for money's sake." As per the report, the concerned officer did admit the fact that he had done so because he wanted some extra money.

Case 3. A bus carrying more than 60 people plunged into a river as a section of a bridge gave way. Only 2 children could be saved. The bridge had been completed and opened to traffic only less than a year ago. An inquiry held into the accident revealed that the bridge had not been constructed as per the specifications. Iron reinforcements were of substandard size, material and quantity, the proportion of cement with sand was much less and so on.



For getting your job done in any Government department like electricity or telephone you will have to grease the palms of the employees.

Well, it will take a long time to establish why the culprits resorted to the use of substandard material, but prima facie it is clear: Their intention was to make as much profit as possible, of course with utter disregard to human life.

These 3 cases may be isolated but are in fact connected through a central invisible thread to a dreadful cancerous disease that is gripping our country: "Getting rich overnight." Not that it is catching only rich, elite and educated class people in its grip as might be misunderstood from the cases mentioned above. Well, these have been picked up and quoted at random. The fact is, you look around in any direction, or peep into any hole, almost every time you are bound to come across such bizarre incidents taking place.

At lower levels and in day-to-day life, you see people involved in making an extra buck at any cost whatsoever. You go to any public dealing office for getting your work done—electricity, water, housing, telephones, courts, licences. Barring a few exceptions, you can't get your job done, even the routine one, unless you have greased the palms of the employees concerned. Almost everyone is out there to make

extra money, over and above his or her salary and bonus in most of the cases. Corruption, dishonesty, unscrupulousness and crookedness are fast becoming a way of life.

At higher levels too, things are no different. Smuggling and drug-trafficking are known methods of making money—fast and through wrong means. Changing of parties and dissi-



dent activities by members of Legislative Assemblies and Lok Sabha are latest acts with an eye on lakhs of rupees which normally change hands on such occasions.

Since the beginning of civilisation, money has played a pivotal role. But this was confined to certain areas and a specific set of people. At the top of the ladder were kings and monarchs who fought battles basically for the expansion of empires and the associated power through money.

And at the bottom rung were thieves, looters and dacoits who operated only for money. But people in between, constituting a large majority, lived an honest life. But all that has changed during the current century. More so during the last 2 to 3 decades as far as our country is concerned.

Earlier, according to George Bernard Shaw, "Lack of money was the root of all evil." But in the present-day scenario, this line from the New Testament is proving right, "The love of money is the root of all evil."

In the present-day society the values of life are changing. Decency, honesty and sincerity are yielding place to deceit, deception and dishonesty. The problem is difficult but not insurmountable...

Lust for money

Really, it is the lust for money, more money and still more money which has thrown overboard all established social norms and ethics of life. In the present-day society, the values of life are changing. Decency, honesty and sincerity are losing their rightful place. Instead there is deceit, deception, dishonesty and insincerity in various dealings and relationships.

The basic aim of life appears to be shifting towards making more and more money at whatever cost. This, no doubt, is a dangerous disease. Not only that. It is contagious as well.

Now before you think of treating and removing any disease, it is necessary to know the causes/reasons for the spread of the said disease. The same holds true for this lust for extra money as well. There are few specific reasons for it.

The basic reason is the change of thinking and perception of the present-day generation. Simple living is no more an accepted norm. It appears that what John Matley had said in a lighter vein "Give us the luxuries of life and we will dispense with the necessaries" has been taken seriously by almost everyone.

It looks as if the present generation has accepted as a rightful and sensible statement what a queen had said—stupidly, of course—about the hungry population that, "If they don't have bread, why don't they eat cake?"

Acceptance of rotten and distorted norms is another reason for this urge for extra money. Nowadays one does not look at the good and worth emulating deeds of one's neighbour, relatives and friends. Instead, one looks at their acquisitions, standard of living and other wordly possessions. In doing so, one invariably ignores the means adopted by the so observed person in coming to that elevated state. As a result, one tends to go ahead—to acquire all those things, by hook or by crook.

"Well, if everybody is doing, why not me?" is the common refrain. This, in fact, was the reason given by the Army officer whose misdeed was quoted earlier. Asked to elaborate, he reportedly said, "Look, what is happening at the top, Bofors and all that. The politicians are literally mortgaging the country. They are stealing hundreds of millions of rupees. They are buying substandard items for the country. Compared to them, I think I haven't done anything. To my mind, whatever I have given must already be known to them."

Another reason for this is that social norms have changed. Earlier, when a person indulged in something unethical and morally incorrect he was shunned by society, was usually declared an outcast. Thus one was usually scared before taking such a step. The fear of "what people will say" used to stare him in the face. But not any more. Attitudes like "What can anybody do to me" and "so what?" are being formed.

This is a dangerous trend, no doubt. If unchecked, this disease is going to get to the roots of our social life and destroy the beautiful set-up in which we are living, if not during our lifetime, then definitely so during our children's times. Now, is that what we should leave for our future generations? Definitely not.

The problem, no doubt, is difficult but not insurmountable. It can be tackled if all of us are determined to tackle it. It has assumed alarming proportions because of all of us. And it can be eliminated only if all of us put in our effort. Thus, let's decide to put in our bit. The others will follow suit, sooner or later. ■