

FROM THE EDITOR

THE TRIUMPH OF TRUST

Can we exist without trusting one another? From the very moment we were born—from the very first cry we gave out asserting our trust that there were people to hear it and respond to our need in that utterly helpless condition—every bit of progress we have made in life has been possible with trust and trust alone. The child begins to toddle with the trust inherent in his consciousness that the ground under his tiny feet will not give away and that there are hands to steady him if he stumbles.

Try to imagine a condition in which we cannot trust anything—from the food we take to the word we hear or the word we speak ourselves. It will be an impossible situation.

Yes, our trust is betrayed on numerous occasions. But if we take stock of even a day's experience, and objectively analyse every action and word of ours and every action and word of the others we had to do with during the day, it will be obvious that the cases of our trust being betrayed are infinitely fewer than the cases when they have been honoured. We live by trust. Because it is so natural, we take its role in our life for granted. And, because of this, the instances when the trust is not kept become so prominent. That is the truth.

Hence we ought not to doubt an accord, a treaty that is only a confirmation of the natural truth. We need not doubt the capacity of the parties concerned to execute the trust, for to execute the trust will be only in keeping with the basic law of our existence; we need not doubt our own capacity to help them carry on in accordance with that truth, because to carry it out will be the natural course of things.

Such an accord is the one that has put an end to the violent ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. It is a triumph of trust—of the trust that we breathe every moment in our life. We can afford to suspect it only if we forget that trust is natural. Indeed, the habit to suspect things has lately eaten into our system of thought. We do not know how devastating our suspicions can be. Our negative thought-formations often damage, unknown to us, many a healthy and happy project in the offing. On the other hand, a collective force of trust can transform even an act or utterance of hypocrisy into truth.

The courage, the precision and the goodwill with which the Prime Minister of India and the President of Sri Lanka concluded the agreement is commendable. Even more commendable is the trust shown by the leaders of the Tamil militants in the good offices of India. In a world torn by conflicts of many kinds, this is an example of far greater import and glory than generally realised. It is glorious because it raises the banner of trust and goodwill above the atmosphere made rotten by doubts and hatred.

There may be elements who love to wallow in hatred's drain. They may whisper their poisonous prudence against any triumph of trust. Let us beware of them, but let us not care for them too much. Let us extend our support, with formations of our goodwill and with our prayers—to this treaty as well as towards all endeavours which pave the way for the conscience of man to prevail against the army of the dark little imps of mutual hostility.

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE

I had just come out of the book stall in the posh hotel and was at the middle of the road when the much awaited shower came down. I could have retreated into the hotel, to the safety of the air-conditioned lounge behind the giant glass doors, but the sudden release of heaven's coolness was far more attractive, the suddenly assumed brisk movements of the pedestrians was lively. I ran with the others for a minute or two and took shelter in a road-side fruit stall.

A gentleman, old and tall, was just saying to the shopkeeper, "All right. I take this much." He had chosen his half dozen from the alluring array of ripe mangoes. He held his shoulder bag open. The shopkeeper dropped the fruit into it. While the quality of the customer's trousers and shirt, repaired at several places, suggested that he had once seen very good days, his gait and his tone of speech indicated that he was hard put to reconcile himself to his present condition. He held out a five rupee note. "Return two rupees," he said.

The shopkeeper accepted the note, but said, "Not two rupees, but one rupee. Did I not say that I cannot sell at less than eight rupees a dozen?"

"You agreed to six rupees a dozen!" said the gentleman in a stern voice. "I did not!"

"But you did not say 'No' when I said six rupees!"

"That is a different matter. But I had not agreed to your bargaining!" firmly said the shopkeeper. After a little more exchange of stark matter-of-fact words, the gentleman emptied his bag on the shopkeeper's table, took back his five-rupee note and walked away in a huff. The shower had thinned, but his departure was a pathetic sight.

Five minutes passed and I was ready to leave, for now it only drizzled. But I saw the gentleman coming back. His selection of mangoes still lay on the table. Without a word he picked them up and put them in his bag. Then he handed over the five-rupee note to the shopkeeper. There was no more any demand for a return of two rupees. Evidently he needed the mangoes. There was no other fruit-shop nearby. Perhaps he had promised to his grandchildren that he will bring them.

The shopkeeper put the note in his drawer. He shuffled through his collection of notes of different dimensions and then selected the crisp-most two-rupee note in his stock and gave it to the customer. The gentleman stared at him. Disgust was fast disappearing from his eyes. But the shopkeeper kept his head hung. He did not look at the customer.

"Well, thanks," muttered the gentleman as he went out of the shop, his motion slower this time. I came out to the open, feeling inexplicably elated. Everybody I saw in that rain-soaked evening along Dr. Radhakrishnan Road, Madras, looked beautiful.