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We Are Part Of The Solution

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Nirbhaya's tragedy is a wake-up call for all of us. Crime and violence has affected the very fabric of our society. Ask: What has happened to our value system? Why don't we think before inflicting pain on another? Why has the manifestation of violence in our behaviour reached such dangerous levels? Perhaps we know the answers to all these questions.

While demanding solutions of the government may lead to creating a legal infrastructure that is more severe and stringent, what is the aam admi's role in all of this? Can't we start the reparation process today, in our own little ways? It is instructive to recollect M K Gandhi's favourite quote: "Be the change you wish to see in the world."

We have waited too long for others to change society, when the truth is: *If we want to transform society we have to begin with ourselves.* At an individual level we have to learn the art of situation management. We can do this by responding positively to negative situations. In this way we will be able to stop the vicious cycle of violence from continuing.

At the social level we need to know our limits if we want to remain in the peaceful sphere. The way to go is with a peaceful approach, by abjuring violence in any form and by avoiding any kind of coercion. How can we do this? Social evils do not erupt all of a sudden; they germinate and grow over a period of time, sometimes assuming monstrous proportions. One practical way to begin the process of humanising society is to make motivational education accessible to all.

As a long-term plan we need to make efforts to teach value and peace education both at a

formal level in schools and colleges and at an informal level through positive personality development programmes to foster responsible citizenship. The aim of such an exercise is two-fold: First, ensuring that individuals develop their personalities on positive lines and learn to manage situations and second, their relations with others in society are developed on positive lines so that they become responsible, peaceful members of society. The emphasis here is on inculcating ethics to create a duty-conscious society, instead of only a rights-conscious one.

A rights-based society leads to social anarchy, whereas a duty-based society will lead to harmony, solidarity, peace and compassion. A rights-based society is based on the 'we-they' concept, in which we look at other members of society as 'they', not part of us. A duty-conscious society, on the other hand, is based on the 'we-we' concept in which all members of society are an extension of us. Such a society is built on the principle of reciprocity: if members of society want positive speech and behaviour from others, they too have to speak and behave positively with them.

And as the family is the building block of society, the significance of family values cannot be ignored – perspectives and attitudes to gender, ethics and morals, cultivating compassion and love and respect for fellow beings are all imbibed by children who learn through a process of osmosis, from family members, and other near and dear ones who teach by example. Teaching of values begins at home, the child's first school of life. We have to ensure that our behaviour with others in family and society is on positive lines. Only then can society start developing on positive lines.

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