

CORRUPTION UNBOUND

Synopsis: Corruption in India has acquired new dimensions. Its boundless sway is in direct relation and proportion to our moral degradation and erosion of values. Making a quick buck by fair means or foul has become the only aim of life, giving rise to all kinds of evil and self-defeating practices. Giving and accepting bribes of modern materialistic life. Political leaders and parties are the most corrupt followed by business houses, corporate bodies etc. The collusion between politicians and businessmen is now an established fact. The fair price shops under public distribution system for the poor masses have become a big source of loot and black-marketing for the concerned people and authorities. The poor are undergoing untold hardships while the essential commodities like wheat, rice, kerosene oil etc. meant for them at subsidized rates, find their way to the black market. Even the universities colleges, schools etc. the temples of learning have become a good breeding ground for corruption. Law courts, police, bureaucracy all are in a tight grip of corruption. It has got ingrained in Indian psyche. There is parallel economy in operation and black money is ever on the increase. Though control and eradication of corruption in India is not easy, however, it is desirable and needs all out efforts and cooperation. Without human values and moral principles life is worthless.

Corruption is a pest, a contagious disease which affects all those who come in its contact. And today nobody seems immune. Corruption in India is all-pervasive and rampant. It has acquired new dimensions and become like an epidemic. It is no more endemic. There is hardly any department or segment of life where corruption is not found. In each and every walk of life it has its boundless sway. It has increased spectacularly and astronomically in direct relation and proportion to our demoralization, erosion of values, greed, materialism, lust for pelf and power and moral degradation. It has dehumanized the whole society and character has been the biggest casualty. "Honesty is the best policy" is now an empty slogan, a saying found only in the books of quotations and proverbs. Nobody believes it, let alone practicing it. People want to become rich overnight through all sorts of unfair means the ends. Like the witches of Shakespeare's Macbeth they too believe that fair is foul, and foul fair. Character, compassion, equipoise, contentment, faith in oneself and God, faith in oneness of life sympathy, non-injury etc. Are no more. They are the commodities which have disappeared from the market of life.

Today all our relations are based on calculations of gain and lose. We think of everything in terms of money and price and not in terms of value, aesthetic appeal, moral satisfaction etc. Making a quick buck has become and sole aim of life and consequently cheating, bribery loot, corruption, hypocrisy, scams, scandals, adulteration, murders, rapes, terrorism, militancy, violence, drug-trafficking, frauds etc. have become very common. Corruption in all forms and subtle shades can be seen. Corruption is now well established in all walks and departments of life- political life, business, administration, educational, institutions, judicial system, public distribution system, police, security, grant of licenses, globalization efforts, hospitals, local institutions and skills have become so internalized that they have resulted in complete demoralization, frustration, degradation and immoralisation of the society.

Corruption is being perpetrated in several ways. Businessmen are busy seeking licenses, contracts and permits by crossing the palms of the authorities with silver and gold. In the stock market flight by night operators are having a field day. There are fake certificates of many blue chip companies in thousands. Companies float public issues, collect money in crores and crores of rupees and then disappear overnight in the thin air. Kick backs, pay offs, money laundering, black-marketing etc. are thriving unprecedentedly. There are huge tax evasions with the collusion and connivance at tax-authorities themselves. Under the very nose of the police crimes are being committed because of the tacit connivance and approval of the people in the uniform.

Career politicians are busy in a systematic loot. Opening of the economy, globalization of industries, etc. being in transition, have become fertile grounds of all sorts of corruption. The bureaucrats are misusing their powers and positions to acquire wealth. There are no accountability, no quick and suitable punishment for economic and other related crimes. Lack of effective checks and balances permits favouritism, nepotism, frauds and scandals.

Corporate houses and business establishments contribute generously to partly funds during elections; party rallies etc. and in turn receives undue favours, patronage and licence to indulge in restrictive and corrupt trade practices. There is a network of fair price shops throughout the country to distribute subsidized foodgrains, sugar kerosene etc. to the poor people on very low rates. But much of its finds its way into the black market. A big percentage of ration cards is bogus, and another big percentage of ration-card holders do not draw their rations regularly. Thus, a large portion of the supplies is at the disposal of ration shops dealers. They sell it off in the open market at high profits and thrive. There is a nexus between ration shop-owners and corrupt officials of the department.

This massive racket in public distribution has been flourishing while the poor masses are facing untold hardships, harassment and misery at the hand of these people. This fair price shop=owners practice all sorts of manipulations and machinations. They weigh less, replace good quality foodgrains etc. with inferior ones, and adulterate them with dust, dirt and pebbles. According to a report in Delhi alone half of the ration and fair price shops are benami and owned by the legislators of Delhi Vidhan Sabha or their relatives. In kerosene oil the ration shop-owners are making a very fast buck. Its rationed price is Rs. 2.52 per litre which is being sold at the rate of Rs. 7 to 11 in the black.

Universities, colleges and schools are the temples of learning but these too are not free from rot and canker of corruption. Fake degrees, diplomas and certificates are freely available. Admissions are on the basis of donations and not on merit. Appointments are manipulated and influence in the corridors of power. Universities and colleges have become hotbeds of power, politics, machinations, and manipulations and elections-feuds. The whole education system, including examination and admission, is rotten, obsolete and full of malpractices. Mass copying, leak of examination papers, bribing of examiners, paper setter, supply of answer material from outside, threats to honest invigilors and all sorts of cheating are now very common. The education mafia, cheap tutorials and private schools, local political leaders, photocopiers etc. are minting money in the business.

You cannot have your work done without payment of gratification. No paper of file moves from one table to another till you put some 'weight' on it. Money is the sole moving force; it makes the mare go and run whether it is police department or courts of law and justice. You can obtain a driving licence of a car, scooter, bus or truck without knowing how to drive a vehicle, in no time, provided you have money enough to spare and bribe the agents and concerned authorities. They will authorize you to kill yourself and other in road accidents against a payment of a few rupees. Every dog has his price and you it and they would start licking your feet. Corruption has so ingrained in Indian psyche that we do not look down upon it, that it no more pricks in our conscience. It is openly said that if you are caught red-handed accepting bribe, evade the law by bribing the custodian of law.

There is parallel economy in operation in the country and the black money is ever on increasing because of political patronage and connivance. They fund elections expenses of the political parties, foot the bill of huge rallies. The underworld dons, mafias, racketeers, drug-traffickers and smugglers etc. are the real masters and rulers. They are the real powers to be. The honest officials are few and far between. They are harassed, pressurized, blackmailed and

threatened by their corrupt counterparts and their political gurus to follow their dictates. They cannot resist long these pressures, temptations and threats and so ultimately give in the swell the ranks of corrupt ones.

Elimination of corruption is not impossible but it is certainly very difficult. It cannot be checked and curtailed unless there is strong desire and will to stem the rot on the part of the leaders and the public in general. It should be dealt with iron hand. There should be transparency in dealings; red-tapism should be done away with and more teeth should be given to the courts and law-enforcement agencies. The pay and allowances of the employees should be adequate and commensurate with the cost of living. There should be deterrent punishment for people indulging in corrupt practices. It is high time that corruption is check-mated with combined efforts of all concerned. It is an evil that boomerangs; nobody can escape the vicious circle. If today you are receiving the bribes, the very next you will be required to grease the palm of somebody else. We are wasting our power in money can never give. Ill-gotten wealth is bound to have evil results. Such money can never give satisfaction, contentment, happiness or solace. According to Mahatma Gandhi "The very essence of civilization is that we give a paramount place to morality in all our affairs, public or private." Human values like honesty, compassion, righteousness, morality etc. are the very elements that go into making life worth living. Sans honesty and character, what is life? Life without the human values is like a house built on sand. In 1996 some honest I.A.S. officers in Uttar Pradesh held a poll to expose their corrupt counterparts in the state. They tried to identify the three most corrupt officers through secret ballot. Undoubtedly many I.A.S. officers in U.P. and other states have accumulated huge wealth disproportionate to their known sources of income. Such attempts to expose corrupt officials may go a long way in cleansing the bureaucracy of the scum and dirt of corruption.