

FIGHTING CORRUPTION

THE INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

By Dr K Brahma Singh

Seeing that every one in the country today, without exception, is decrying corruption one wonders where corruption is and who are the corrupt people. And yet, can there be any doubt that corruption pervades the country – it being glaringly visible in practically all walks of life. Obviously there exists in the country today a comical situation wherein the thief is also shouting thief. An analysis of the situation would show that notwithstanding the great din of anti corruption slogans being raised by all and sundry and the death sentences being repeatedly being passed by those highest in authority, no one really means any harm to corruption. The two great deterrents to corruption – the fear of law and the fear of God – have gone dormant and little, if anything, is being done by any body for their revival.

Fear of Law

The effectiveness of law as a deterrent to corruption depends on two factors – one the sincerity of purpose of the law enforcing authority and, two, the extent of cooperation from the people for whose benefit the law has been enacted. In the present context both seem to be missing. The sincerity of purpose of the law enforcing authorities can be judged by the numerous scandals/scams that they themselves have been involved in over the years since Independence. What may then be expected from law when its custodians themselves have scant regard for it? The situation is equally grim as far as the public support to law is concerned. Indeed corruption would not have survived had it not received universal public support.

Besides the acknowledged “corrupt” most other people may be classified as the “potentially corrupt” and the “passively corrupt”. The “potentially corrupt” are exactly like the “corrupt” but without the opportunity for becoming so. Their cry against corruption when translated into practical language only means “why he, why not me” and “give us also a chance”. The “passively corrupt” are those who though not corrupt themselves encourage corruption mostly as a matter of convenience while others do not possess the necessary courage of conviction to be able to break away from the vicious circle wherein one indulges in corruption because the other is doing so. Such people swing with the times - honest when led by honest leaders and dishonest when led by the dishonest. The honest type opposed to corruption as a matter of principle without caring for personal benefits are very few; and those out of them who have the guts to stand up in open confrontation with the corrupt are fewer still.

With the vast majority of the people on the side of corruption, either actively or passively and the law enforcing agencies not interested in enforcing the law, being themselves engaged in corruption, it is no wonder that law is totally helpless in dealing effectively with corruption.

Influence of religion

Religion has for long been acting as the omni-present policeman for safe-guarding the element of morality in society. It is a pity that our “progressive” politicians of the post Independence era failed to see this important role of religion and treated it as a meaningless dogma based on superstition and blind faith and, therefore, anti-progressive. The most detrimental part of it all has been that they have not been able to provide a substitute to religion – such as some equally binding secular ideology. Absence of the influence of religion thus created a moral vacuum, which has been filled by immorality and corruption.

The essence of religion is not belief but *karma*. The fear of God and the element of blind faith has been introduced in it for the benefit of the less philosophical mind, which is influenced more by faith than reason, to keep him from swerving from the path of morality even under the extreme stress of the struggle for life that he may be engaged in. With the corrupt prospering all round without being struck by the wrath of God as envisaged in all the religions of faith, the fear of God and blind faith may have lost some of their efficacy but religion, which considers practicing of morality as the highest form of *karma* remains as valid today as it ever was.

The religious way of life is, in fact, a practical way of life based on the laws of nature. One such law is that society would disintegrate without morality. Immorality would heighten man's struggle for existence, bringing to the fore his inherent pernicious qualities. Morality is, therefore, not just an ecclesiastical requirement for gaining entry into heaven but is necessary for ensuring peace on earth and preventing the destruction of mankind. Again the religious belief that happiness cannot be bought with money alone is not just a belief but a hard fact of life. No matter how much money one may earn the means will never be able to match the wants, which makes seeking of happiness through amassing of wealth and fulfilment of wants never ending wild goose chase. Least of all can happiness come through easy money earned through corruption. Usually such money goes the way it comes. Happiness can, therefore, come only through contentment and exaltation of the soul through appropriate *karma* and not through material pursuits.

It is a pity that the practical aspect of religion, which could have been used to effectively combat the menace of corruption, has been completely lost sight of in this most religious country. Without meaning any disrespect to our religious leaders it may be said that most of them are still glorifying the means (like prayer, worship, faith, rituals etc) while neglecting the end that is *karma*. Stress is still being laid on faith even as the present generation seeks reason. Why ask them to secure their next life even as they are engaged in destroying the present one. Without again doubting the height of their own spiritual stature, and their personal standards of attainment in this field, it may be said that not many of religious leaders have succeeded in dissuading their followers from the path of corruption. As a matter of fact even the most corrupt and the immoral are being given hope of salvation through practice of beliefs and rituals. Open confrontation with corruption is, perhaps, being avoided for fear of losing following and in some cases money.

The Answer

Corruption breeds moral degradation and our instinct for survival as a nation should urge us to wage a determined war against it. No doubt corruption being so deep-rooted would take years of concerted effort to get eradicated, but for this effort in the right direction must be from now on. However with the political leadership itself deeply involved in corruption, the solution does not lie with it. The only way seems to be individual effort guided by selfless social and religious leaders. In this wild goose chase of material attainments an individual needs to be halted and made to ponder whether the chase is worth it. If corruption is a relative term why compare one self with those who are more corrupt. Why not look at those who are less corrupt or not corrupt at all. No doubt some people are honest because they do not have the opportunity to indulge in corruption and do not deserve credit for being honest but they certainly establish the point that one can live without being corrupt – even perhaps in a happier way.

Corruption having literally entered our blood it may be futile asking an individual to give it up over-night. It would be like asking an addict to give up drinking suddenly. As a first step a call to the corrupt to introduce some morality in their corruption may prove to be more useful. Let them be corrupt if they must but let them not in the name of God stoop to the mean extent of being devoid of all moral values. Let them not for petty gains cause

incalculable harm to the country or the society. Let not their corruption be the cause of misery and suffering to their country-men and let not justice be denied to the poor because of their corruption. One might through stretched rationalisation be able to justify to himself some corruption but not limitless corruption. Let everyone lay down some standards for himself to go by – based not on the existing opportunities for corruption but on some moral code of conduct. Morality would demand that one sets for himself a higher standard of honesty that what he expects of others. All thieves and dacoits have moral code of conduct so why not the corrupt.