

# **CORRUPTION**

Hardly a single day passes without a corruption story breaking out in the media. Every one of us has been a victim of corruption, directly or indirectly. We condemn it vehemently, talk against it in public forums, but unfortunately at the end of the day most of us compromise with it. Still worse, there are a few who trivialise it. The time has come when we need to ask ourselves: can the youth of this country realistically make a difference in the corruption scenario? What are the costs involved and are the likely outcomes worth the cost?

Before attempting to address the issue of fighting corruption, one needs to understand its magnitude and full dimensions. As per a survey conducted by the centre for media studies, every year the poorest of the poor in this country pay an estimated Rs.8830 million for availing 11 basic services. Imagine this does not even include indirect consequences of corruption they suffered, such as embezzlements in developmental schemes, syphoning of goods from the public distribution system, poor quality basic amenities owing to kick backs in contracting, etc. Obviously no civilised society can accept such systematic loot from its poor and downtrodden.

As per the Transparency International, India ranks 85th among the nations of the world in terms of perceived corruption. As per UNDP, India ranks 128th in the Human Development Index. Obviously this cannot be a mere coincidence – indeed under development and corruption have a symbiotic relationship and trigger a vicious cycle of low growth, less human development followed by even lesser growth. There is no way we can claim ourselves to be an emerging superpower without addressing the issue of corruption.

Like a multi headed monster, corruption has several facets. Proceeds of corruption and crime have the propensity to get channelised into election campaign financing, which leads to derailment of the democratic process. Once in power through corrupt means, such elected representatives seek opportunities for ploughing back the returns through bribery and kickbacks in awarding contracts, influence peddling, diversion of funds from the developmental schemes and several other means. Corrupt elements among

the bureaucracy gladly form a nexus with them and aid and abet the process. Corruption in enforcement agencies has even more vicious consequences: it abets organized and mafia crime which threatens even our physical survival. Corruption at the top encourages public servants at the bottom to engage in petty corruption which adds to the tyranny of the poorer sections of the society. Like cancer, unbridled growth in the wealth of corrupt public servants weakens the entire moral fabric of the society.

Now coming back to the question of what citizens, particularly youth can do to eradicate corruption. Yes it can be done in many ways.

Like every economic issue, corruption has both the demand and supply side dimensions. Therefore, refusal to pay bribes is the essential ingredient in fight against corruption.

Zero tolerance and a public outcry against corruption could act as a huge deterrent. Before attempting the same one needs to show a missionary zeal and raise public awareness on a large scale.

Exercising the power of the ballot box judiciously is the most potent means to nip the corruption in the bud.

Reporting acts of corruption in a fearless manner and giving evidence before court would go a long way in building a deterrent effect.

There are several other means and the list is long. But cardinal to each of these steps is the exhibition of strong will power and firm resolve.

Swami Vivekananda once quoted, "Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life - think of it, dream of it, and live on the idea". Fight against corruption is an idea whose time has come. The need of the hour is to nurture it, mainstream it and take it to the logical end. Like many other successful movements in history, it is the youth who can be able torch bearers of this movement.