

DESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS

Curbing Crime

Q. Suggest three effective measures to curb/control the rising graph of crimes both in urban and rural India. State how the steps suggested by you would prove effective in the prevailing socio-political milieu.

Ans. Notwithstanding the fact that there is a visible gap between official figures, that show a decline in crime across the board, and the people's perception of rising the crime graph every passing day, it is time not to waste our energies over polemics but make every possible effort to come to grips with the problem that has assumed alarming proportions. Unlike the contours and contents of crime of the past, like thieving, eve-teasing, pick-pocketing, robbery/dacoity and the like, the forms of crimes that one reads about in the newspapers is really shocking. The ease with which frauds are committed, rapes and child abuse are resorted to, kidnapping, extortion, custodial and dowry deaths occur, it is nobody's business to suggest that the situation is normal and does not call for panic or poignancy. Besides, cyber crimes too have increased our worries. It is time to wake up and think of ways and means to curb/control the monster that stares us in the face.

"If there is a will, there is a way." Besides the role of police and other security forces in curbing the menace of crime overshadowing the civic life of people, it is the political will on the part of 'powers-that-be' that holds the key. If the ruling elite so desires, the nasty nexus between crime and politics, and crime and corruption can be conspicuously controlled. Let the political parties decide as to what extent they are willing to go to tackle the problem.

The tardy, tedious and tiring judicial process has to be overhauled so that the criminals with muscle and money power do not succeed in manipulating the law in their favour. Quite a few hardened criminals manage to get off the hook because the judicial system is beset with so many loopholes that ultimately help the law-breaker at the cost of law-abiding citizens. The setting up of special fast track courts, modernisation of police, etc. is the crying need of the hour.

The public too has to shake off its indifference towards the happening of socio-economic offences. Any crime that takes place in the society should become a matter of concern for one and all. To think that only police can curb the growing menace of crime, tantamounts to shirking one's responsibility. Planners and policy makers should rise to the occasion and deal effectively with the problem of unem-

ployment among the youth. These are some of the measures, if taken seriously, that can effectively counter the fast spreading fangs of crime and criminals.

Popularising science among students/masses

Q. There is an urgent need to popularise science and scientific temper among people, especially students. How, in your opinion, this can be done in a country like India where blind faith and silly superstition are a way of everyday life.

Ans. Elsewhere in the civilised world contradictions and contrariness in perception and practices may not strike as hard as they do in India. Science and technology occupy a unique position in concept and concrete actions of people the world over, but it is a matter of serious concern that quite a large population, both literate and illiterate, in India is stilled steeped in silly superstitions and illogical ways of behaviour. There is a justifiable desire on the part of people to acquire goods and services provided by scientific research and technological advances, but when it comes to developing scientific temperament and an interest in the study of science for career option, there is an inexplicable resistance. Unless people at large are genuinely convinced of shaking/shedding off the stranglehold of blind faith and odious orthodoxy, they cannot escape from falling into the trap laid by the most crafty and cunning elements. In order to break the shackles of age-old superstitions and weird ways of life, conscious efforts will have to be made to slowly acquire the paradigms of science and scientific temper in the day-to-day life.

Since every aspect of life today offers an opportunity to explore the world with scientific means of knowledge, science and technology should, therefore, be of a great public interest. For this purpose, the use of electronic media, science fairs, and the like should be extensively used to educate the vulnerable sections of society and make them aware of the wonders that science and technology can bring in their lives. It is only through constant and consistent exposure of science and its extensive use in every walk of life that an impact can be made on the psyche of people, and thus popularise science among ordinary citizens.

Those at the helm of affairs should see to it that issues concerning science and technology policy are highlighted, both in legislatures, academic bodies, seminars and other relevant fora. Gone are the days when science was believed

to be esoteric and not of public interest. This is not the case now. In the advancement of life sciences, we have many exciting discoveries, that offer interesting stories, more attractive than crime, movies and politics. Research in bio-sciences and social application of life engineering—health, services and food-chain researches—provide sensational material for making science stories highly attractive and readable to the general public. There is no denying that scientific ideas were instrumental in bringing about socio-political revolutions in the 20th century. Enthusiasm for learning and research witnessed in the West was due to science expose among the general public. If India is to become a developed nation by 2020, both political parties and media must come forward with affirmative action towards popularisation of science among students and masses.

Privatisation of school education

Q. The move to privatise school education as a State policy is fraught with highly undesirable consequences. Express your views based on ground realities, knowledge and experience on the subject of vital social impact.

Ans. There was a time, not very long ago, when nationalisation as a State policy was believed to be the panacea for all socio-economic problems. But now, when free enterprise and market forces call the shots, the concept of privatisation is being eulogised and furthered as the only remedy of the ills that afflict our body politic. The fact of the matter is that truth lies somewhere between the two extremes. There are certain areas where undue controls hamper progress. Equality imperative is the need to provide sufficient funds and political commitment to carry out the obligations that social sectors like free and universal education, health care, sanitation, *et al* entail upon the governments, both at the Centre and in the States. Any talk of handing over the responsibilities of social sectors into the private hands, is not only reprehensible but also fraught with highly undesirable consequences.

If the State has failed to deliver the goods in some vital social sectors, like quality education, it does not mean that the baby should be thrown away along with the bath water. If, for some reasons like lack of accountability, and public awareness apathy and arrogance on the part of public servants, etc., the results have not been commensurate with expectations and targets, the faultlines need to be corrected in a pragmatic manner. The move to transfer the responsibility of school education, specially in villages, remote and inaccessible areas, to private hands is ill-conceived and immoral, to say the least. All know that education to the poor, downtrodden and the disadvantaged sections of the society, particularly the girls, is the least that a civilised society should provide where it is required the most.

The right thinking persons on the basis of their knowledge, experience and ground realities suggest, and rightly so, that instead of privatising government schools, the State should streamline their functioning with regular monitoring of activities. Privatisation will badly affect those who cannot afford hefty fees charged by private schools, wherever locat-

ed. Let us not forget the fact that sharp cuts in budgetary allocation for education is the main reason for the sorry state of government schools. Instead of going in for privatisation, the government of each State, especially the most poor and backward, should provide more funds and streamline functioning of schools under their control, even by engaging panchayats or village-level committees for this purpose.

Professionals and Civil Services

Q. Some right thinking people feel that technocrats/professionals should not be allured to compete for civil services. On a proposition like this public opinion remains divided. You are, therefore, invited to give your most objective views.

Ans. Under the Constitution equality of opportunity for one and all is guaranteed and any departure or dilution of this fundamental right would not stand scrutiny in a court of law. It is an admitted fact that technical education, like medical, engineering, management and the like, entails heavy investment and huge expenditure on each doctor, engineer, management expert, yet, if the professionals/technocrats prefer to join civil services, it tantamounts to near waste of talent, time and money. The other viewpoint held by professional aspirants to appear in the civil services examination is equally valid because as technocrats they can prove better while handling technical matters than the generalists.

The matter, no doubt, is delicate. As a successful professional, the person concerned earns both respect and recognition. Besides job satisfaction, a good doctor/engineer contributes a lot to human welfare. Civil servants, on the other hand, enjoy power, security and time-bound promotions. In a medical profession one has to put in many years of labour to find a suitable job in a hospital, whereas in IAS, one starts a settled life from the day one. While the former make a niche for themselves, the latter are assured a successful career from the day of selection. It is time that technocrats are given their due on the pattern, more or less, applicable to civil servants.

TOPICAL ESSAYS

(For candidates appearing in I.A.S., P.C.S. & other higher grade Exams.)

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