

We, anti-corruption movement and some introspection



Comments 1



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Home loan, car loan, education loan, health loan, travel loan....life on loan. 20 years down the lane of liberalization, this is where the great middle class in India finds itself. As if the burden of the three ancient 'celebrations' was not enough. The just mentioned trio is birth, marriage and death, of them, marriage being the most taxing. In village economy, the life of a Hindu family used to be caught in three debts owing to *janma* (birth), *vivaha* (marriage), *mrityu* (death). This was a cunning strategy of the priest and the ruling class to engage the working class in economic bondage. 20th century saw the springing up of cities in India. Situation remains the same, only it appears in different manifestations. In fact, with the coming in of modern day formal degree-education and varied aspects of 'upwardly mobile' life-styles have added new dimensions to the existing three.

During the ongoing campaign against corruption, people have come out on the streets with innovative catchlines on banners. One of them read, “The origin of Ganga is Gangotri. The origin of Corruption is the Parliament.” It may hold true for the politicians. Do we ever ponder what is the origin of corruption for the average family in India? Unfortunately, it is Marriage. Not the institution of marriage, but the elaborate processes involved in it as in India lays the foundation of corruption. A house-holder’s savings, energy, resources are all drained into this event. Be it in less or more amount, in the name of ‘customs and ritual’, the yellow metal gold plays an indispensable role in a marriage almost all over the sub-continent. If in some places it was less in quantity, in many areas the demand is shamelessly high. Some communities in the hilly terrain of north-eastern parts of the country may live in an illusion that their society is ‘free’ from such customs. However, if they introspect, their requirements have changed unprecedentedly over the last two decades. Beads as jewellery find place in the museum or on the day of some traditional festival. These days whoever can afford would not settle for less than diamond and platinum.

The 3G (gold, guests and gifts) is the hallmark of a marriage in India. The more the better. Less means shame, you are a loser. So, one has to compete with the other. Gone are the days of the simple meal ubiquitous in all marriages, present times demand sumptuous dinners. Each host

family is adding more and more continental fares as if it's a food fair. There is no thought at the result of concentration of food and gas cylinders for one event in one family. Black marketing of LPG cylinders is a common sight during the peak season of marriages. No one seems to complain. Community life, close-knit societies may be on the wane, but marriage is definitely not a private affair as yet.

In this journey from sufficiency to wholesome dependency, the media is the medium. No doubt, tremendous media coverage has lead to the mass eruption in such a short span of time. Had media seen such an unprecedented boom back in 1970s, Jay Prakash Narayan's 'sampoorna kranti' movement might have been as successful as Anna Hazare's anti-corruption crusade. But, at the same time, it is amusing to note that media is the medium of bringing about change in our life-style in the last 10 to 15 years. Be it visual or print, whatever the commercial mass media decides is 'in thing' becomes the fashion statement of the public. Mass media is itself the perpetrator of crass commercialization as well as the watchdog when it comes to corruption in the wake of crony-capitalism.

From dressing, eating and drinking, to deep kissing and item dancing, it is the media which dictates the masses. The message percolates through TV shows, films, magazines, glitzy tabloids, newspapers, and their glossy supplements, internet, mobile communication and what not. Not to speak of metros like Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, the cobra brand of beer launched in London finds way into smaller cities like Mysore, Guwahati, Shillong and towns like Amravati, Jorhat, Khonoma in a couple of days. It's just like launching a Bollywood or Hollywood movie worldwide and carrying a range of life-styles alongwith it. The question is, after the anti-corruption movement, what next? The media creates urge among the masses. Corporate groups uses visual and the page 3 brand of print journalism to create demand among the working class in the country. A voracious middle class has been created. Media generates the need. Let us take a very simple example. Not to speak of a city-bred girl, even a girl brought up in a village thinks twice before stepping out of the home without lipstick. An entire generation has been made to feel so very inadequate about themselves. A boy feels assured of his existence when he can flaunt a blackberry in public. As if these artificial demands were not enough, now we have corporatisation of education. Can we afford to escape education fairs? And yes, who can forget the so called 'great' Indian wedding which the mass media promotes every now and then? Anyone who criticizes this obnoxious display at the initiation to conjugal life is tagged as being cynical. This is another syndrome of the 'great' Indian middle class. When certain scholars cautioned the masses in India about the coming days in the wake of neo-liberalisation, their voices were bogged down. This is a classic practical example of the 'Spiral of Silence' as found in the realm of mass communication theory. Corruption fuelled by crony-capitalism is the Frankenstein of neo-liberalisation. The middle class is caught in a *Chakravyuh* (vicious cycle). It listens to the media, but not to the conscience. How can we expect that members of Parliament can come up for a conscience vote as advocated by a section of TV channels? If it happens, it would be due to

pressure and an eye on the next elections rather than conscience. Asking Indian politicians to vote for the Jan Lokpal bill is like asking people in India to hold marriages without gold. Will each family in India pledge and sign on a government notification (if such a thing ever surfaces) which asks them to hold marriages without gold, with less than 50 guests, and restrict the number of dishes to 3 ? If yes, then the members of the Parliament and the State Assemblies should not be spared. We hope the proposed Jan Lokpal Bill will see success both in letter and spirit.

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