**Review, Recommit & Redouble**

**Against Bribery & Corruption**

***A Worried Citizen***

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| ***Percept*:** Many –though considering population it is only very few-have been involved in crusading Against Bribery & Corruption (ABC) during the last two years. Let us review as to what we set out for, what has been achieved & what we desire be done within reasonable time frame, and then recommit to the causes and redouble efforts broadening the base, garnering support and multiplying the impact. Otherwise, it would only be sincere efforts to feel that we have tried, and to our utter dismay, those targeted and not affected would laugh and continue to misgovern. We must go beyond our strengths & work with all activists. |

It is past time to redouble efforts after recommitting ourselves as nothing much seems to have been achieved in our fight Against Bribery & Corruption (ABC) while seeking cleaner governance. Don’t lose hearts, for, without strife, changes can’t be caused.

Kalmadi’s election loss at regional/international (AAA) level is due to scam taints and it shows that we continue to send such people to responsible positions despite bad track records. It is further underlined by re-election of a convicted Rajya Sabha member for another term of 6yrs. So what difference have the protests made in last two years?

Brace for more of the same! Things will get worse before they will have any chance of improving. With coalition politics here to stay and the leading party unable to discipline its partners it will be mayhem for sure for some time before things begin to change. Coalition a*dharma* will take us to depths before purification for probity in public life is possible. Fear that parliament will remain dysfunctional –decisions made extra-constitutionally- is genuine.

To begin with, all of us are responsible for the swamp and miasma we find ourselves in. Be it the lower strata due to their poverty and helplessness, the middle class due to apathy, the well-to-do due to their affordability and the business elite with their favour seeking pay outs!

Few activists have strived to change the system, but it remains a gargantuan task. Most would have worked with their strengths; but as no results have yielded, it is time we all came together in struggle towards ushering desired changes more quickly. We must carry people from all sectors and strata in this fight, as some may be reluctant or less expressive.

For those with ideological bend of mind it is time to be accommodative, for those with philosophical bend it is time to act and not explain, for those who preach it is time to practice, for idealists it time to be pragmatic, for those with writing and collating skills it is time to reach out to the less informed, for those with speaking skills it is time to address larger gatherings at street corners, and for those limiting their activities to small groups and known strata, it is time to embrace the masses. For, without them no change can be caused and will happen, and with them one can create responses, reactions, tumults, rebellions, revolutions et al. Anyways, it is time to lead, follow or move. What an opportunity!

The intellectuals, educated, well informed, well connected and networked have all failed themselves and others by failing to stop the rot, its spread and impact. We stand drained and debilitated. The poor have been bought at the ballot boxes. Whether they vote for one or other party, they are rewarded with gifts of all necessities for better living, that they need not worry who is in power and how mis-governance occurs and is perpetuated.

With 60% of population below thirty, 20% each living in urban areas and towns, and 60% in rural areas, the challenges to serve them all are immense, but must be done with alacrity. As it may be physically impossible to provide city standards to all, stopping and reversing migration from villages is critical, as farming has lost its sheen with land holdings below sub-optimal levels. Local and regional development must be well telescoped with national priorities and those focused on costs and economies of scale. Manufacturing sector must retain its competitiveness both nationally and internationally, for service sector to piggy-back on it. Promises on Roti-Kapda-Makan, Sadak-Bijli-Paani etc with campaigns of Garibi Hatao, India Shining etc are failing to enthuse the public used to being taken for a ride. When will we ever –we have to- assure social security and health care for teeming masses? Not to forget the amendments for so many of the outdated laws?

What need be prioritised is availability and accessibility to water, food and health, and assured through connectivities and communications. Wireless handheld communications and data exchange has immense potential in developing and delivering services to meet the needs and demands of the people. Solar power could be our biggest boon as well as the size and spread of the market, blessed with natural resources of all kinds. Nonetheless, prioritising and ensuring development and delivery mechanisms seemed to be skewed. They are being bartered as political favours and captured for exploitation by the few turning democracy to a mockery by reserving it for the few, of the few and by the few!

We have been sold out for next few generations through crony capitalism, public private partnerships –as successive governments, ideologies and leaders have failed to manage & deliver what could be done- benami holdings, increased FDI (foreign direct investments), P-Note (participatory notes reported to be at 1.68 Lakh Crores {28B$} at end May ’13 up from 1.57 at end April), that all are nothing but amassed illegal income finding their way back to our bourses and economy, to capture it for dividend free incomes for generations to come.

Thus we have been enslaved by the economy and dynastic politics with no other choice in sight. Not to worry but! The challenge is to arouse passions of positive politics in the masses by planting seeds of hope in them, to achieve critical mass so that missions can be carried forward. At the rate things are going wrong, hope is being kindled in the hearts of many that they will change for the better one day. But the questions are how long that it will take, how smooth the transition will be and how it can be brought out.

Choices are threefold. First, to change the system by working with/within it by protesting, cajoling and convincing that changes are inevitable. Non co-operation and non-violence that MahatmaG had instilled in us should be put into timely use. However, this seems ideal and wishful thinking -given the lack of success, absence of response from those in power- and failure to build bridges between the rulers and the ruled; amongst the subjects too.

Second is a plausible intervention by the armed forces when they reach the limit of tolerance and take up the responsibility of correcting, the system having gone too far. Attention is drawn to a retired General’s recent remarks; sentiments may be brewing deep down within rank and file, though it was been tepid so far. We do have such history when JP called the armed forces to get active, imposition of emergency and the democratic changes that ensued. Do they have a choice to remain unperturbed with the goings on?

Not to forget that it taken a civil war to abolish slavery and many such for drastic changes.

Third is a revolt leading to revolution! This may be unavoidable if those in charge of the Constitution, its compliance –in spirit and letter- and amendment, refuse to kowtow to wishes of the citizenry a la vox populi of the populace. Demands for Reject and Recall, and banning criminals from all elected posts are urgent with Political parties placed under RTI; reservations for women too. Referendum using electronic voting through mobiles –once citizen identity through *Aadhar* and other schemes are in place, must be an eventual goal.

Trickle-down economics is not working. For that matter, none of Socialism, Communism or Capitalism has proven to be workable for India. That free market will self-govern through competition driven pricing has been proven to be absurd and wishful thinking in the market crashes, with libertarians also calling for more controls/laws. Socio-politico-economic system need be redefined as best suited to us; not growth based, but sustainable for the large numbers we have, preserving environment and resources within renewable range.

Salaried Class seem to be bearing the burden of taxes, as administrators and those in power make deals with largesse to beneficiaries. Freebies to poor voters from exchequer taxing the well -to-do, does not make sense as the indigent are aware of the siphoning off.

Dynasties like the caste system must give way to new breed of politicians, away from nepotism and onto management techniques. Meritocracy must be put back in place by removing malfeasance of money power. Democracy of the people by the politicians for their own interests must be buried deep. *Aam Aadmi* cannot be befooled in the current era of free and easy information access. RTI need be more widely/easily usable against bureaucrats, politicians, courts etc. Cost of corruption is about 30-40% of the budget of economic activities, be it domestic or commercial. Just imagine the benefits to all if we can control, reduce and clean up!

A workable and strong Lokpal, Lok Ayukta and Right to Services are genuine demands. Cleaning up the judiciary and clearing backlog of cases on war footing is a must. Thankfully the media seems to work hard for their own rating cum popularity exposing everything; but one and all have so got used to scams, its effect has been tempered, and tampered too with allegations galore for each and everything! Paid news too!

Divisive politics of caste, creed and spirituality (the basis of religions) must be shunned to avoid fundamentalists rearing their ugly head through fascist tendencies. Linguistic division of States was for the ease of unifying through communications and administration; it should not turn out to be or used as obstacles against development. About 50 States with natural boundaries like rivers and mountains/hills maintaining unity in diversity could be the way ahead. They would ease administrative burden and spur development with infrastructure and employment, but be wary of wastage/leakage and inflation therefrom.

Since our constitution does not provide for its end and full rewriting, we will have to make hard choices to get it done; a harmless revolution may be the right choice. But once the crowd and its leaders taste power, it will be irreversible. Learn from Tunisian, Brazilain and Egyptian uprisings. I for one am putting my bets on working on all three and backing that one which will eventually deliver, though it may turn out to be unpleasant or unpopular.

The system will crumble and a new edifice will have to be painstakingly built with blood and sweat of next few generations. The worry is whether it can be avoided, postponed, put off or served in a peaceful manner. The choice may be now with those in power, but not for long, as about 30% of the districts (170/602) are said to be Naxal dominated already. Is this what we want to pass on after more than half a century of self-rule that our fore-fathers had fought for centuries and bestowed us?

There is no choice but to get our acts together; from bottom up with the well informed and committed coming out to take charge. Without numbers and participation at the lowest level it will be waste of time, energy and resources. So let us all work for Common Cause of Cleaner Governance.

Disobedience embedded in us from fight for freedom –as seen at traffic lights- has become part of our character. It could be turned to an advantage by using it against governments. Those in the know, well versed and with good bridges to the system must work with a well-planned/focused agenda, patiently coaxing their contacts. Those who are doing their part to committed specific causes (like helping the poor/needy etc), must realise that macro issues need be solved by which micro ones will get fillips.

Here is a chance for bureaucrats (both ex & current) and others to be reborn by penance through rededicating to corrective measures, having failed in their duties earlier. The twin questions to bystanders and fence-sitters is what can you do? When will you join us?

This is a call for another freedom struggle –*andolan*- to fight the social enemies amongst us that has outgrown all control and corrective mechanisms. Let us not miss the opportunity for easier and peaceful transitions and transformations lest a violent one is forced on us by sheer need and circumstances.