**AGAINST BRIBERY & CORRUPTION**

Liberalisation has created opportunities to serve huge market of pent up demand, but as brought forth by scams, it is timeous to clean up. Failure in governance has led to breach of fundamental principles of ethical conduct in enterprises. Accounting all outgoes for problem solving as expenses to facilitate business processes, results in high costs and impacts competitiveness too.

Moral and ethical practices add to brand value and enhance image with stakeholders and clients. Corporate social responsibility is not only about giving away a small part of profit for laudable causes. It is also about demonstrating leadership with surplus that can be spared to promote best practices, and raising the bar in fairness and operating standards.

As in 2G, fraudulent means is illegal and unlawful – it will remain so under any laws- and is not sustainable. Unfair access and advantages obtained through nefarious means is bound to backlash sooner or later, becoming a burden to be carried in balance sheets and shouldered in relationships.

There are compulsions to be compliant with rules and Acts legislated against bribery. The long arm of the law is longer than one can imagine and big brother has mechanisms to trace and track fund transfers and identify numbered accounts. So it is a matter of time before the beans are spilled.

Internationally, even if agents, associates, partners, contactors etc assist to obtain, enlarge and perform business activities, the principal can become culpable, be fined and activities curtailed. UK’s Bribery Act is an apt example; similar ones exist in US, OECD, Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea, China etc. Compliance with UN’s Convention Against Corruption ratified by India wherein whistle-blower protection is provided for, make its all the more imperative. Hence, Management Associations, Corporates and Chamber Federations etc must make bold moves to usher changes at fast pace.

We do have role models to go by; Suresh Hundre’s Polyhydron Group in Belgaum is a shining example that can be emulated. Industry captains and management stalwarts should take initiatives to ring in corrective mechanisms; denial modes and sweeping facts and practices under carpets will only let them smoulder and erupt at most inconvenient junctures. Checks and balances have failed and as such new mechanisms need to be instituted to work corruption free towards desired goals.

India has also ratified **Multilateral Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters that** seeks to promote transparency and exchange of tax-related information. It also provides for assistance in the recovery of taxes, giving a fillip to the efforts of the government in bringing back Indian money illegally stashed abroad. It also allows India to seek past information in criminal tax matters as a party to the Convention is compulsorily required to exchange the past information in criminal matters for at least three years. The convention **explicitly provides for automatic and spontaneous exchange of information and would permit tax officials to enter the territory of the other country to examine individuals and records.**

***Anti Bribe Coalition launched on 1st May ’11–an offshoot of EXNORA- is networking with India Against Corruption, I Paid a Bribe.com etc*** to co-ordinate activities addressing underlying issues that can be tackled with committed sustained efforts, through RTI and other means. Whilst discretion and power may be pinpointed as the root causes, systemic failures of institutions is obvious. Quite simply democracy/freedom of our Republic stands imperilled. By silence and passive ineptitude –lack of participation in voting & public affairs- we are forfeiting our basic rights.

Corruption occurs due to the inaction of silent majority and is perpetuated by exploitation of the helpless by those in the know and power. It is frivolous to dismiss the current imbroglio as sign of times and that amounts to escapism. It behoves on us all to join the struggle for second independence where the enemy is within us itself. Unless we break away from mentality of ignoring such matters, it will continue to grow, mutate, enter all walks of life and explode at our faces.

When probed deeper, philosophy and ideologies would be seen to underlie all issues. Nonetheless, having an opinion and paralysis through analysis will not help. The challenge is on the right thinking to proactively introduce corrective measures. Courage to pursue and implement/get done facing adversity is the hallmark of change management. Let us have brigades of such capables.

It is a loner battle in principle; groups and organisations add credence and enable create critical mass. As seen in recent movements, the people are willing and ready to question and counter due to its ill-effects affecting them. Continuous coverage by news channels has ensured that it cannot be ignored. The legal system in slumber has been woken up and is delivering sensible judgments.

Not that we did not have provisions to handle such malfeasance; but those in power have perpetuated a system where the administration and the overseers are hand in glove with them, ensuring that the business class has to kowtow to them all at the behest of political masters and coalition compulsions. *Paan* spit stain in stairwells of government offices is symptomatic of malaise that we live with. We must be gladdened by recent moves of CAG, CBI, CVC, CEC, Supreme Court etc

Crony capitalism has become evident and the masses are readying to revolt. It has become a socio-economic issue with political overtones as development is seen to be favouring a few at the expense of others especially that of the poor; caste, reservations and other typical Indian problems are making it worse. For those who derive satisfaction from karmic deeds and choose to focus on specific activities for their contribution towards social welfare, this is a God sent opportunity to take more holistic view and help the society in dire need in a macro cause.

**For the entrepreneurs and business community, Honesty Standards for Organisations (HSO like ISO) has been drawn up for voluntary compliance, to lay down internal standards, to monitor, get audited and accredited in due course. It can be started in-house, building trust amongst employees, taking contractors into confidence and revealing work ethics to outsiders through transparency. Details are available at** [**www.antibribecoalition.org**](http://www.antibribecoalition.org) **and** [**www.wikihonestcitizen.org**](http://www.wikihonestcitizen.org)