

# Corruption

One of the greatest threats to humanity has always been the corruption, which at present is also a major obstacle in good governance. Broadly speaking, corruption is of two types; corruption in society and corruption in governance. I have emphasized here only on corruption prevailing in governance. But it is also true that good governance can also be instrumental in reducing corruption in the society. There has never been an era, area, system or government which could boast of being absolutely corruption free. But degree of this menace has varied from time to time or from area to area etc. Meaning of this term also varies from person to person. A public sector employee goes on tour on public expense. At the place of his visit he uses taxi as his conveyance for some areas and auto rickshaw for the others. He spends Rs.100/- on taxi and another Rs.100/- on auto rickshaw. His entitlement is taxi. He knows that taxi charges, though would be allowed to him at approved rates, but would be restricted to Rs. 75/- only owing to approved rates being less than the actual ones. He puts up his claim in a manner that he increases kms. covered by taxi and reduces the kms. covered by auto rickshaw so that his total claim is sufficient to cover his expenses. Many of us would consider this action as clean from the angle of morality, though it wouldn't be clean from legal point of view. And what if he uses auto rickshaw only and claims for taxi and rules do not permit it? Some of us would justify his claim from morality view point with the opinion that when he was entitled for taxi travel it is he who suffered inconvenience of auto rickshaw travel and that it is not immoral if he compensates this inconvenience. And what would be said for an arrangement if an official plans his official tour in a way so

that he could attend to a social function at the visited place and files a claim for the tour expenses, the same being official?

There are some immoral acts which we commit without even noticing them to be immoral. Receiving of festival gifts from our official beneficiaries, indulging in gossiping during duty hours, favour in processing the cases of favorites etc. are some examples. Administratively one can't do much to check such kind of petty corruption, except, however, nurturing the value of morality and of self restraint, though rigid adherence to these principals may make the person a laughing stock in his work area. At the same time it is also true that absence of self restraint in such petty cases would result in temptation to indulge in serious corrupt practices. Even then, such petty acts of corruption are not tackled very seriously even in the clean societies. Discussion of them in societies like that of India would put you in the domain of public ridicule. Should we, then, concentrate only on serious type of corruption? One will promptly say yes, without knowing that it is the launching pad for higher level of corruption.

## Magnitude

In India corruption has spread cancerously in all the nook and corners of Administration. Your complaint to the police, if you are an ordinary citizen, will certainly fetch the attention of the duty officer. But his intention would seldom be of extending you a helping hand. He will see if you possess a quality and capability to oblige him with some gratitude for his endeavors to help you. You should be quite clear in your mind that you would have to pay the price of his endeavors only and not for the end results, and that too at the rates decided by him. This is true in almost all the cases of public services. No sensible

person in India is unaware of the severity of this problem, but its degree may vary according to the experience of an individual. I am presenting only that much which has been experienced by me, though it is quite clear in my mind that actual position is much worse than that.

In some offices corruption is systemized in such a manner that people have become used to paying for it. The system is streamlined in such a fashion that you have to approach the middlemen for getting your work done. People also find this quite convenient as they know before hand what they have to pay, as rates are known to the middlemen. Each and every person in the line gets the share as per his position in the hierarchy. And if you have some courage to get your job done without the involvement of middlemen you will end up tearing your hair. In one such instance, when, as per my thinking, I had sufficient time of four months to get the job done, which is got done by the middlemen in a week or so, I had to run from pillar to post for full four months and the job was done, though without paying any gratitude, but with involvement of a senior officer, who was quite gentle in the sense that he valued my efforts and fixed the deadline. I was able to get the job done as my case was crystal clear, which is not generally a case with general public, owing to a hoard of absurd formalities and rules.

Intensity of this problem can be gauged from the fact that corruption in some cases, nay, in majority of the cases, has the involvement of each and every person of that department, junior most to senior most. And concerned public knows it well. In 1986 I was traveling in a truck from Delhi to Ludhiana with some official material. In every district we passed through in Haryana, and then in Punjab, the truck was stopped by a cop for documents check. But in stead of asking for the papers, he would ask the driver for a note book,

obviously kept for the purpose. The driver would slip a Rs.10/- note in the note book and handover the same to him. He would pocket the note, scribe something on the note book and return it to him. That was a permit to allow him passage through that district without proper documents, as any other cop stopping him in that district was shown that inscription, seeing which no other documents were asked for. My curious enquiry found out that the cops were given a special code, known to all the traffic cops, indicating that the 'fee' had been received. To protect the code from 'misuse' the same was changed every month. All the truck drivers were familiar of this practice and were happy to pay, as otherwise, you know, how difficult is it for a trucker to fulfill all the legal formalities for plying a truck! In India no trucker can earn any profit by plying truck strictly as per traffic rules. The situation is exploited by the protectors of law with scant respect for the duty. And it would be laughable to argue that higher ups in administration or the ministries are not aware of it.

Tackling of this problem is not as hard as it seems; it is much more harder than that. It is not that there is dearth of willing people. They are plenty. But biggest hurdle is that they are not allowed to fit in. One dirty fish can make the whole pond dirty, but one clean fish can't cleanse the filthy pond, as the dirty ones would not let it do so. And clean fish, though not scarce, have their own problems that they can't enter the pond. If, by chance, one is able to, it is an odd man out case. Almost all the 'lucrative' posts carry a price tag, which is the attraction only to the entrepreneurs of corruption. The disease is curable to some extent in Central Govt. posts, but state govt. posts are a gone case. I once applied for the post of Excise and Taxation Inspector in Punjab Govt. I was very enthusiastic that posts would be filled through a written test, though many demoralized me by explaining the exploitability

of the test. I don't know whether something fishy happened in the written test or not, but I was in the successful candidates list, which were only about 10% of the total appeared and about three times of the vacancies. I got a call for interview, for which my friends advised me to arrange some sources or resources, as from then on, the selection criteria would not be the merit alone. A family well-wisher sent me to a senior executive in the secretariat considering him to be a 'good source'. The person was PA to the Governor and the state was under Governor's rule. He informed me clearly that his efforts would be of no use, as the person heading the selection board was a political person, who would oblige through his agents only after accepting some gratitude. I was also informed about the range of rates depending upon the capabilities of the agents involved, and that any efforts by him to push me without consideration of money would lead to blocking of my that route also. The money involved was to the tune of salary of two to three years. Well-wishers of my family persuaded my father to arrange that sum, as that could have been recovered within six months of joining the service. My father was also tempted to, but I declined any such move, and appeared for interview just to see how that farce was going on. I had no interest to join that post, as your honesty would lead to confrontations even if you don't check others and remain confined to your sincerity. I was relieved of any dilemma of joining or not joining as I was not selected.

Some of us may not digest why and how your honesty can lead to confrontation even if you don't poke your nose in affairs of your fellow or senior colleagues. It is very simple. Your honesty would require you to act as per rules. But interests of your seniors would be hurt if you don't oblige them or their favorites by ignoring the rules. Initially you would receive some vibes to 'mend' yourself, and if continue unabated, there

would be some serious consequences leading to confrontations. Don't be over-enthusiastic that such situation can be tackled by reporting the matter to higher authorities. In the forthcoming pages I shall share my experience of that futility. I may lack in presenting my experience which may lead you to believe that I am a born pessimist, or fault finder in the activities of others. I am not. This can be verified from any of my friends, who consider me jolly and full of life. I remain happy with any kind of situation, without any grudge with my luck, as I am not a big believer of luck or God and know that I am far more better than many in the society. I know that I live in a society with plenty of corrupt people reaping fruit of the freedom to loot vested in their position. There are also many, more brave and quality fighters, whose sufferings in their struggle to keep their honesty above board are so enormous that mine are not even a fraction of theirs. But I am telling only my own as I am not in a position to discuss the ones which I have not endured.

I was working happily in a corporate house when one of my colleagues informed me about an opening in an autonomous body of govt. of India. I was not interested to apply, knowing fully well that your hard work and capabilities are seldom valued there. But he instigated that that was a good office and that I could have achieved instantly the carrier which was expected not before four or five years of service in that corporate. It proved to be really a good office, to the extent that I was selected purely on merit, though later I was told that my boss had thwarted a plan of his senior officer to engage his known person. The office was also not any public authority, but an autonomous development center working on corporate lines, thereby minimizing the chances of corruption. But a Govt. office is a Govt. office and can never boast of efficiency of a corporate house. My first assignment was

enough to show me the casualness of the approach in tackling the routine jobs. I improved that system of reconciliation of production figures with the sale figures, the rationalizing of which resulted in finding a good amount of unbilled dispatches during past three years, which would have always remained unnoticed without my efforts, about 85% of which were then got billed. This was against the interests of some vested interests, and they, being senior in hierarchy, were successful in abandoning the exercise within two three years. Another noticeable feature of working there was that interpretation of rules was done according to the person for whom the rule was being used. The rules applicable to a senior were not extended to the juniors and the senior most had the privilege to get his claims passed without applying any rules. My boss sometimes showed his inability to work as per rules lest he be rebuked by his seniors. He advised me to be a bit elastic in cases related to high ups.

My reluctance to extend undue favors to the high ups was not seen positively, resulting in changing or bypassing of channel. But I was happy that I was not forced directly to oblige someone out of way, except in two or three cases, where I did not budge. After one such altercation my boss told me that my honesty and efficiency had impressed the high ups so much so that they need my services in purchase department. I saw in it a design to remove me from the present post. The person already handling that job was honest without even an iota of doubt. My indication to this point was responded with a plea that there needed a lot of streamlining in that department, for which I was considered as more suitable. I was further assured that once the seat is streamlined, in a year or so, I would again be shifted to my original post. But that never happened during the tenure of the head of that office. When the work was streamlined and about two years

passed without any action for my call back to original post despite my oral requests I had to start perusing the matter in writing. I was denied any call back to original post stating that there was no post lying vacant in my original department. In fact I was appointed as Cost Accountant but that activity was shelved by the management for the reasons best known to them. I was given the job of financial accounting, which I did for 13 years, without complaining about spoiling of my career. But, at that stage, my application for call back to my that post was responded with a reply that there lied no vacancy in my pre-transfer department owing to the fact that the original post of my appointment was abolished and I was given the job in financial accounts department in order to keep me in employment. It would be interesting to know that my applications to other Govt. departments for better jobs were not forwarded in my initial years of employment, when I was doing the job of financial accounting in stead of cost accounting. I felt quite embarrassed with the remarks by a person who had not sent my applications to other Govt. departments with the plea that his department finds people with great efforts and had made a rule not to forward applications to other departments during probation period. The rule was not as per govt. instructions and was not passed by the appropriate authority. And prior to stoppage of my application, no other person was disallowed this facility. My question in this regard was answered to with the plea that this rule was applied only to persons liked by the management. And when my age for outside govt. job was over I was treated with the disdain described above. And no good private house is much enthusiastic to appoint a person employed in a govt. department owing to the presumption of govt. service rendering any person lethargic enough to be avoided from employment in a private company. Moreover, my health started deteriorating; I became a heart patient and a patient of

ankylosing spondylitis. I was getting the same pay in purchase department as would have been getting in my original department, and there were no chances of upliftment there either keeping in view the attitude, hence I stopped further requests.

Without looking much seriously to such official behaviour, personal behaviour of the head was quite friendly with me. He regarded me as a sincere and capable person. He had faith in my capabilities to the extent that he put me under a person senior to me in hierarchy, with good technical knowledge but lacking administrative skills needed for that job, due to the confidence that I would handle that part well. The job being more of an administrative nature than the technical one my boss, in stead of guiding me, looked towards me in every major decision making. I came to know that in an important meeting with the higher authorities, in which I was not present, the head was annoyed with my controlling officer as for every information asked for by the head he called me on intercom. The head sarcastically put up a proposal that I, in stead of reporting to him, should be made his controlling officer. He was so gentle a guy that he did not object to the proposal and showed his willingness to cooperate in that case. The reason to mention this episode is to let the reader judge how big price has one to pay for working sincerely according to rule book and not according to the wishes of superiors. Despite having the competence, which may be judged from the above episode, I was never considered for any promotion in 23 years of my working in that office, while some had garnered three or four upgradations. And when the govt. decided for time based compulsory upgradation to the stagnated employees, the rules were twisted so that I should get the minimum while the favorites get the maximum.

It is very difficult to maintain your honesty for long when you see several dishonest and incapable people being promoted for their sycophancy. A big heart is needed to control the temptation to mix in the herd and get benefitted. If one is able to withstand that also, it is more difficult to control the anger for your neglect but rewarding the ones far less capable. You can, anyhow, soothe yourself by considering this all as the price for keeping your soul above dirty water, but what would be your reaction if your sincere actions fetch wrath and humiliating rebuke of your corrupt superiors for not cooperating in their corrupt practices? You would propose bringing of such activities in the notice of their seniors. Well, first of all, it is not possible under the conduct rules, though some respite has been provided now by the whistle blowers protection measures by the govt. But if you have the courage to leave the job and then complain even then there is little you can do. My experience in this regard may throw some light on this aspect also, as I decided to leave the job and take up with higher authorities about the pressure I was being exerted upon for working for the benefit of the seniors but against the organization.

The situation became worse with retirement of the department head, who, though did not encourage my attitude, yet had a respect for my honesty. The retired head did not go beyond interpretation of rules as found suitable to him or showing his annoyance in case of difference of opinion. He was much cautious of avoiding any act involving his bad name. He was an intelligent person and often got out of any sticky situation without confrontation. He used to use argument for pressing his view point rather than thrusting it on others, except, however, in a few cases, where situation demanded him to act like that. But the new head was neither intelligent nor experienced to tackle such situations. He had no respect or

understanding of rules and adopted procedures. Any clarification by any one for showing his inability to act as per his desire because of it being against rules was seen as refusal. While the previous head would provide solution for any hindering problem faced by one in acting as per his requirement, the present one would not listen to anything. And as if these traits were not enough, he had an added quality of being corrupt. And, to make things worst for any sincere person, he did have backing of his seniors at head office. In fact his appointment as head of the office was due to his influence in the head office, which appointed him despite the fact that he did not possess the required minimum experience prescribed for that post; and without getting that clause modified by any authority. And his arrogance, dishonesty and blessing of his seniors, coupled with forming of a syndicate of like minded or yesmen in his work area, would not allow him to make any efforts to see beyond his own or his favorites' interests. Any effort to convey him the logic was seen as an insult for him.

After retirement of my controlling officer in purchase department I was given the independent charge. I was expected to oblige him by bye-passing of rules or by just dressing up the files to show them in order. When he saw that I would not oblige him much, he transferred me to accounts department, my original one, for which I had stopped writing after refusal to do so by his predecessor, as discussed in a previous paragraph; by promoting a person from accounts department to man the post held by me in purchase department; to the department where there was no vacancy for my cadre; to the same post which, as per his predecessor, was given to me just to keep me in employment and for which I was not entitled to be re-transferred as I had been given alternative employment in similar cadre. But I had no reason

not to rejoice as the move came to me as a pleasant surprise, and at a time when I had not even a glimpse of hope, and had compromised with destiny. But for him it was done for teaching me a lesson as I was given the seat being looked after by the person promoted for my post in purchase department . I had no objection for that as the job belonged to my cadre and the promoted person was doing that job under a person of my cadre, while I was to report directly to the officer to which the other person of my cadre was reporting.

My capabilities to see the things more minutely than the previous person, owing to my higher qualifications and more analytical approach, had more trouble for me in store. I noticed that many payments were being made without proper approvals or incomplete approvals. I, in order to take care of the irregularities, asked for the documents which were not asked for by the previous person, or not provided even on asking. This was not liked by many, especially by his close ones, even though it was beneficial for the department. My observation that an agent for facilitating our import functions was being paid whatsoever he billed, without verifying even the rates agreed upon in the agreement expired many years ago. My observation resulted in appointing an agent with far better quality of services at less than half the rates being paid earlier. In stead of being happy that I had removed some irregularities being committed under his nose, for which he could be held responsible, the head considered that as a hindrance in smooth working of his favorites. I could not become smart enough, like others, who would oblige him by not questioning his unauthorized and wrong claims and win his confidence, because that would have been a cheating with my sincerity and conscience. One of his favorites was able to place an order to a party of his choice by pressurizing the person in purchase department promoted in my place for painting of 50

plates for lumpsum amount of Rs. 12000/- or so (I do not remember the exact figure). The plates usable in that department could not be bigger than 4 sq. ft . in size. And the lumpsum amount in the order looked exorbitantly high keeping in view the prevailing market rates for painting not more than Rs.3-4 per sq. ft. Any other person from my department would have ignored it because of being as per purchase order and keeping in view whom the job belonged to. I also knew that any observation in this regard would not be seen positively by the head. But my conscience did not allow me to pass the bill blindly. I returned it for justifying the rates by clarifying the size of plates. A grapevine reached me that matter instantly reached the head through his colleague because he was not in office, a lady more close to the head, for which the reaction of the head was that who was I to look into that area. But he sent the concerned person on his return to me for discussion, who reacted angrily that I had doubted his and purchase committee's credentials. I made him to sit, cooled him with my conversation, and explained how lacking was the purchase order. From the conversation it came out that the area for painting was not more than 200 sq. ft. The reason for high rates was that the paint was not ordinary paint and it was done by a special procedure (even then the rates were not justifiable). He agreed that these aspects, i.e. quantity of work, quality of paint and special procedure needed for that job should have been mentioned in the purchase order. He appreciated my observations that it would have been difficult to clarify these aspects to the auditors. He replied to all the observations, which became the part of the payment voucher, but my observation was still not liked by the head, treating it as an overreach.

The head tried to adopt a trick of appeasement in order to get cooperation from me (at present I do not remember if it was

prior to or after the above noted episode). I had never denied cooperation to anybody in the matters beneficial to my organization. But that could not be extended to anybody if not as per rules or if against the interests of the organization. I was invited to a party being organized by the department belonging to the above noted person for attaining of the targets successfully. I was not interested in such celebrations till the organization was running in losses. So I reached home after my duty. I received a phone call from the person with a pressing request to join that party saying that the head had specially asked him to invite me. The social etiquettes did not permit me to refuse. Later I came to know that there was no official approval for expenses incurred on that party and the amount was 'adjusted' in the official expenses. Now, would that honor showered by the head be enough to change my attitude and start passing the payments involving the head and his dear ones without looking much into the rules and work ethics? The head and his yesmen thought exactly in this manner, as claims without proper approvals started pouring in from these quarters at much higher pace. I had to face a great difficulty and confrontations in convincing them to come with proper papers for such claims. Though required paper formalities were completed, but, in stead of seeing the reason and appreciating me for this, as would have been done by any sensible person, the head saw it as his insult. I was told by one of his close person that the head was very angry with me for such 'objections'. I requested him that I should be appreciated that I was obeying the orders issued by the head himself and following rules and regulations circulated by him, and that I would have no objection if the rules and procedures were changed, in the event of which I would start following those rules. But the head was not sensible enough to understand or appreciate my intention. He started thinking of initiating some move to get rid of the thorn in his flesh in my

form. The canteen contractor was asked not to supply me tea at my seat and my controlling officer was asked not to let me go to canteen. My office records were scrutinized in order to find something fishy. And when nothing of that sort could be found I started receiving advice that I should take care of my ill health and avoid its further deterioration by unnecessary confrontations. I would have readily accepted that had I not been asked to indulge in wrong doings. But that was not to be.

One of his yesmen, who wanted to show himself capable after getting promotion through ridiculously cheap means, wanted to show more revenue generated by his department as compared to the expenditure. The chances of increase in revenue generation were remote as he had to indulge in corruption, not only for himself but for oiling the palms of the head also. The other way out was to decrease expenses, which was also not possible. He, with his cunningness, found a noble idea, for which the head was also taken into confidence. He started booking some of the items consumed in his department under capital head in stead of revenue head, as was being done earlier for 25 years or so. As he was one of the dear ones of the head, no person in purchase department, and then the stores department, could dare refuse him from booking it in capital head. I returned the bill for booking under proper head. I was called in the head's office, where officials from stores, purchase and user department were present. The head was infuriated that when stores and purchase deptts. were booking that item under capital head, who was I to question them. I informed that since accounts department had been booking it under revenue head, some justification was needed for its booking under capital head. In an angry tone he told that he had discussed the matter with head office and the change was in their knowledge. I requested that for my record instructions in this respect be

issued. This enraged the head to the extent that he started intimidating me by shouting in a hoarse and humiliating tone, without any respect for my age ( I am older than him by about a decade), knowing fully well that I am a heart patient. I felt so depressed with his attitude towards my sincerity and honesty that I wanted to go to some unknown place. My senior colleague, who was present in the meeting as my controlling officer was away, got frightened and proposed me why we should get the things done in a right way if he was adamant to do it wrong way. I thought for a minute, gathered courage and refused to budge under pressure and told him in clear terms that if he wanted to get that expenditure capitalized he should instruct it in writing. The head was not willing for it and terminated the meeting. The bill was later got passed from my colleague under capital expenditure without any written orders. The head of purchase later sympathized with me with the remarks that whatsoever I was doing was in fact in his favor and he was a fool not to recognize it, and that I should also start doing what he wanted me to do and let him face the consequences. I laughed it away with the remarks that though it is very difficult to withstand such pressure, yet it has to be withstood in order to tread on the right path.

To cope up with such perpetual mental fatigue I thought it appropriate to forward a note to my controlling officer acquainting him the pressure I was undergoing. In the note I detailed how corrupt officers like the one mentioned above were flourishing and sincere people like me were subjected to mental torture. (The officer got promoted twice by relaxation of minimum educational qualifications prescribed for that post with approval from the authority not competitive to do so. You can judge the absurdity of logic put forth for this relaxation. Minimum Educational Qualifications for the post of Assistant Manager Heat Treatment were diploma in mechanical

engineering or metallurgy. But that person was possessing diploma in electrical engineering. A proposal was put to the governing council that since heat treatment department uses electrical furnaces in heat treatment process, hence diploma in electrical engineering should also be considered as minimum essential qualifications. The governing council approved the proposal on the recommendation of the previous head, who did not consider it necessary to get it approved from the govt. authority, as required under memorandum of association of the office). I mentioned in my note about the absurdity of the logic used in the relaxation of essential qualifications. The job of heat treatment is for treatment of metals needing expertise as to which structure should be heated at what temperature for how much time and then immersed in which liquid to get the require hardness. The process needs precision of a surgeon operating upon a person, as costly tools could crack with slight lack of knowledge. Knowledge of electrical engineering was just like the knowledge of a person who knows how to make machines and equipments used in operation theatre. He may be knowing how to repair those equipments better than any surgeon but his that quality cannot be considered equal to that of the surgeon for the purpose of operating a patient. Some cases of his cheap fraudulent actions were also mentioned by me in that note. My officer forwarded that note to the head, which resulted in further escalations of tension as the head was perturbed with the dare of a person pointing out actions of doubtful integrity of his dear ones in which he himself was a party. The lack of his job knowledge and resultant losses were concealed by this head, naturally, not without some gratification. In order to teach me further lessons he issued an order that in the absence of my regular controlling officer this corrupt officer, with academic qualifications of diploma in electrical engineering, without having any knowledge of

accounts, would be my controlling officer; controlling officer of a person Master of Commerce; despite availability of a higher officer designated as Assistant Manager Administration and Accounts who was reporting directly to the head for administration functions. I viewed issuance of that order as an assault on my dignity. I returned that order with my refusal to obey that order, ready to face action for insubordination. But some intelligent chap advised him not to initiate any because of the embarrassment attached to that order.

When he could not find any thing worth initiating any action against me he, with the connivance of the head office, where he had a good influence for the reasons other than genuine, opened a branch office at Jammu, though memorandum of association of our organization did not allow any such branch office; by signing an MoU with another office in Meerut under the head office, though Meerut does not come under the area of coverage of my organization. That was done to facilitate the head for frequenting to his home on official expenses, alongwith handing the head a whip to take care of some 'spoilt' people. He planned to issue an order of my transfer to Jammu, which was totally illegal, before issuing of which I was advised that that could be withheld if I promised to mend my ways. I was not ready for that as I was not doing anything wrong, refused to oblige, and the order was issued. The office did not have any transfer policy. The law position is clear that this power cannot be used for settling the scores by pick and choose method. My transfer was challengeable in the court and the head knew it well that his orders would be set aside. He also knew that he would still be a winner as that would take years to materialize, resulting in sapping me in legal game, for which I would have to fund for the costs and he will enjoy the show on official expenses, for which he would also

get his share from the amounts paid to the hired legal consultant.

The idea to discuss this all was to make the reader aware how difficult is it for an honest person to keep his soul safe under perpetual attacks of powerful wolves. Now there is an urgent need to understand how difficult is to take up the matter with the higher authorities, as I have experienced. I was not very enthusiastic to take up the matter with courts of law and spend a life in the hope of justice, since, I knew, it would never be done. What would be dispensed in the name of justice, if ever it is done, could be termed only a small compensation for my huge sufferings but no punishment for the person responsible for that. Most of the shrewd public authorities take this course of denying genuine benefits to their adversary subordinates, knowing fully well that these would be made available to them on approaching the courts. But they will lose nothing, as the case would be fought on public expense and they will be rewarded with the fruits of long harassment of their adversaries, which can be extended further by approaching the next court on finalization of the case. The idea behind his move was exactly in this line of thinking. But I already had undergone mental agony for 23 long years and had no guts to endure it further in view of the ailments crept in my life owing to the environments I had been in for so long. I used to fall unconscious, frequency of which got increasing from initial once in a month to almost every alternative day. My family was not willing to let me join at the new place of posting by going alone. It was not possible for them to accompany me as the transfer was 'initially' for six months, implying thereby that I would be called back if I move with my family. Moreover, the move was not in the interest of the organization but only a ploy to harass me, which can be judged from the fact that no other person was ever transferred

to that place when I did not join there. In the meantime, during this small stint in accounts department, I had come across a number of irregularities, which I intended to take up with the higher authorities, as I felt it was my national duty to do so. This would have been a source of further victimization at his hand. I made up my mind to say quits and sent a reply showing my inability to join at Jammu with the remarks that though the move was contestable, I would prefer quits and requested for voluntary retirement.

I got a tremendous response to my offer, as the thorn had been found so easy to be pulled out. The in-charge of administration department informed me that I shall be allowed more benefits by allowing me voluntary retirement. I was advised to send unconditional voluntary retirement request, which I sent with three months notice as required under the rules. I was advised to join at Jammu for the sake of honouring the orders of the head. But I preferred leave instead, as the orders were ill intended and illegal. During this period my request for voluntary retirement was accepted as per central govt. scheme, but not before asking me to go home without carrying any bitter memories along. I replied that memories can't be eroded easily, but those can be soothed by abandoning the bitterness. That was prompted with a draft memo intended to be issued to me whether my grievances submitted by me through that note had been addressed or not. I was asked to submit a reply that I had no grievances then. I did not want to fake my feelings and told that my reply to the memo would not be as desired. On knowing my view point that memo was not issued. Later I requested for timely clearance for my dues for which I was again persuaded to write a few lines that my grievances had been redressed. My query as to why this issue was given such an importance revealed that it was feared that I would highlight the misdeeds

mentioned in my note to higher authorities after my retirement. I clarified that I have to highlight, not only the ones mentioned in my note but also the other ones which came to my knowledge later. I also pointed out that my acceptance of amicable redressal of my grievances at that stage would put more weight on my complaint in stead of reducing it, and hence, was not favorable to them also. And that, since my grievances were not redressed, accepting them to be redressed would be a faking, which I could not do. From then on, during all my meetings with the incharge of administration, I was persuaded to withdraw my request for voluntary retirement and start working as desired by the 'seniors' so that I could be allowed to continue my job. I did not agree. He talked to my wife and asked her to pursue me for 'mending' my attitude and continue my job, and that going against the trend of office life would be harmful to me. My wife told him that she would have done so if I had been doing something unfair, but was not ready to persuade me to abandon the right path. The atmosphere started heating up after that. My dues were started to be calculated at the rates for an ordinary retiree. But those too were not paid on my last day in that office. I was the only retiree in that office who was sent without any farewell. The security people were instructed not to let me enter the premises and my queries about my dues were replied with taunts. It was only with the intervention of the PM office that my those dues which could not be refused under any circumstances, far less than the ones admissible to normal retirees, were paid.

I approached the PM office with the complaint of the head regarding his ill-treatment and pressure to deviate me from the right path and work as per his will in stead of following the rules. I also highlighted the irregularities committed by him which had come to my knowledge by then. I also requested

that the official does have a good amount of influence in the ministry and the matter needed to be inquired by some other agency and not by his own ministry. But the PM office ignored my fears and forwarded the complaint to the ministry, which ultimately reached the head for filing his reply. During the course of filing of reply my retirement benefits as applicable to general retirees were paid. I was also asked to make a compromise under which I could be allowed to rejoin my duty by annulling the voluntary retirement if I promised to close the matter there, stop writing to the PM and start working as per the 'requirements'. I was also given the liberty of continuing with my option of voluntary retirement with extension of benefits as per the scheme under which my application for voluntary retirement was accepted. I was threatened that in the event of pursuing the matter further at my end my dues would be restricted to the ones as payable under ordinary retirement. I did not made any compromise and informed that I had made the complaint as my national duty required me to do so, and that I would not do anything against my conscience. After some time I received from the head office a copy of the reply submitted to the PM office informing therein that my grievances had been resolved and my dues paid. I wrote time and again about the falsehood of the reply with a request for inquiry by some other office and asked for the copy of reply submitted by the head in his defence so that his lies could be responded with actual facts. But all those letters were sent to the same ministry again without any information to me about any outcome. I can't say what was the reason for indifference by the PM office. It could be the general indifference found in any government office or a result of some connivance or tendency to protect the fellow officials; either of the reason was more worrisome than the other. In the mean time, in order to dig out more, I called for some information under Right to Information act. I received only a partial

information, that too not without tremendous efforts. My complaints to the Information commission for supply of the remaining information were tackled in such a way that I have no iota of doubt that the CIC was siding with him. In stead of punishing the guilty for not providing the information properly I was frowned that I was settling my personal scores by demanding the information under RTI. He could not clarify how the RTI can be used against an official if the concerned official commits no irregularities. But he had no time or intention to listen to me.

You might question why I did not pursue the matter in a court of law. Well, my experience with the courts is also not very encouraging. Frankly speaking the courts look temples of justice to the people who are lucky not having ever approached them. Once you approach them you will be forced to rue your decision of doing so. Apart from the delays and countless adjournments sometimes the decisions are so ridiculous that you end up tearing you hair. Can any reason justify the same amount of punishment to Sanjay Dutt for keeping a gun illegally for self defence, at a time when law and order was chaotic, when there was no protection for ordinary people also in which situation threats to rich are a lot more, as pronounced to a criminal for keeping that for the purpose of extortion and other criminal activities during normal times when there was no threat to life? Or can the punishment pronounced for misuse of position for molestation of a child named Ruchika and subsequent torture of the family leading to her suicide be described as sufficient? My experience is not that horrendous but still sufficient to refrain me from court battles. Let me give a few examples of my experience.

During my tenure with this organization I had to act as defence assistant to an innocent employee who was victimized for his loyalty to the organization in stead of to the officer. He

was inspecting authority for all the purchases and used to be too rigid to compromise with the quality of materials purchased. The head of purchase was very upset with his behaviour, who was also his superior and controlling officer of his controlling officer. He placed a purchase order for construction of boundary wall on a contractor of his choice. The quality of construction was far below the acceptable standard. The employee resisted all his pressure to pass it. Finally he was removed from the job of quality inspection by appointing some other employee for that job and bill was cleared for payment by getting the quality accepted by the new inspection authority. It is another matter that the wall gave way in less than a year and had to be constructed again. Instead of feeling ashamed of his own act he considered him as source of all that embarrassment. He started nurturing malice against him and remained in search of an opportunity to fix him. When he could not find any he decided to frame him.

A case was made that a machine operator was doing some unauthorized job on his instructions. His senior officer, who was his (framing officer's) subordinate, was presented as eye witness. The operator was pressurized to give a statement that he was doing that job on the orders of the framed employee. In order to cover up the unavailability of any written instructions, statements from three more yesmen were taken that the victim used to get such jobs done from them also. But soon his intentions came to light when it was found that the machine the operator was shown as using for making unauthorized job was under maintenance. The fact was a source of further embarrassment to him. He pressurized the person who was repairing the machine to make a funny statement. He stated that he was repairing the machine without disturbing the operator. Later, during proceedings of

the inquiry, he stated that it was only he who was repairing the machine and that the piece stated to be unauthorized job was, in fact, a rough piece being used by him for checking the adjustments of the machine. Other three yesmen were proved to be lying under pressure during their cross-examination. One declared a date and time at which he did unauthorized job for the charged employee. The records showed that he was on leave at that time. The other, who himself was present on the stated date, further stated that he had reported the matter to his higher official on that day. In his case, however, that higher official was not in the office at the stated time. Despite this all the inquiry officer decided the charges as proved because 'Mr.....(the victimizing officer ) had deposed so!' Our Association wrote to the disciplinary authority about the fraud of the inquiry officer with all the loose points and requested to take action against the culprit officer who played this game. But our pleas were not given any weightage and the poor fellow was fired defying all canons of justice. His appeal to the appellate authority was also rejected without giving him any opportunity of personal hearing, required under the rules, despite his request. The aggrieved victim knocked at the doors of justice. His case was dismissed by the central tribunal on jurisdiction ground and he had to forego a huge amount paid to the legal representative. He then filed the case in appropriate court. But the court did not go into the details of the inquiry. It was considered as sufficient that the inquiry was conducted. The employee was a highly religious person. During this period he had started his own business which was far more lucrative than the job he was fighting for. The person who subjected him to this all had to pass through a nightmarish experience. The employee took this all as justice by the almighty and did not prefer any appeal against the court orders. The case thus ended in a happy note for all

the concerned parties with only casualty being the justice itself.

This was not the only case for my pessimism about the justice delivery system in India. I still feel that our judiciary is far more better than other pillars of democracy. But it is good only in comparison. My own experience in one such case in consumer redressal forum and subsequent appeals have shattered my faith in the system. The judges in the courts are immune against any action for delivering unjustified decisions. So, most decisions depend upon the mood of the judge at the time of pronouncing the decision rather than letting the reason to prevail. Sometimes influence of the opponent counsel or expectations for some gratitude not materialized weigh more than the logic, which was the case in my above noted case. In some cases the judges bind themselves to the precedence so tightly that logic does not get the justified preference. A case concerning one of my close relative is an interesting example. He inherited an ancestral house, which was divided amongst the brothers by reaching at an agreement. Property was transferred in the name of all the brothers in revenue records as well. Two of the brothers made some constructions on their pieces of land. By the time the third one started renovating his portion, one of the brothers had developed some grudge against him. He approached court with a case that the agreement was a fraud and that his signatures were not genuine. The court issued stay orders without listening to the person involved in construction activity. He had to stop the construction. He approached the court with the proof of genuineness of the agreement. The court vacated the stay, but the case for division of the land afresh continued. He told his counsel that he was ready to give an undertaking to the court that he be allowed to continue the renovation, and that he would bear all the costs

of construction as well as of demolition if case is decided against him. The counsel told him that no such undertaking was required. It took about three months for vacation of the stay. But when he was again planning to start construction, an appeal to uphold the stay was filed in the higher court. He had to hire another advocate for higher court. He asked that advocate also for filing the similar undertaking and file a request for immediate vacation of the stay by informing his hardships due to that stay. His house was without any boundary wall with the threat of invasion of unsocial elements. His children, two small kids, were under the danger of attack by stray dogs. Some areas of the roof were under constant threat of collapse, thus endangering them all. The counsel informed him that these aspects would be put up to the judge during hearing. There was no hearing but just adjournments for the next three years. The construction material lying on the site became useless. Cost of construction doubled due to high inflation and cost of labour. And the funds kept for the construction vanished in thin air, as keeping the money away from utilizing in other exigencies is next to impossible for an ordinary man in India. He lost his case without any pronouncement against him and the opponent was a winner even though stay was vacated after three years.

The courts issue stay orders on trivial issues like the one stated above when common man is involved in it. But it does not stay malicious transfers ordered just to harass the honest employees. Even if the transfer is proved to be malicious after a long legal battle, as long as eternity, and an order is passed against the transferring authority (which is very rare) the transferred employee gets his pay only if he had joined the new place of posting. Rest assured that no compensation will be granted to him for this ordeal and no punishment will be pronounced for the official misusing the power for his vested

interests. At the most a remark of displeasure of the court for acting in such manner may be given. So, going to the court without actually joining at a far away place was useless, as the remaining years of my service would have been consumed in court battles. That exactly was the ploy of the head, as after a long legal battle I would have been a loser despite a favorable court verdict and he a winner despite losing the case.

When the courts are so indifferent towards the woes of the litigants what can be expected from other administrative offices? Their callousness multiplies with reluctance of the public for going to the courts in the face of harassment associated with it. General public is aware of it and prefer compromise in stead of confrontation. I also do not allow my hopes to soar very high. But the case of the office of the Prime Minister of India can not be equated with other offices. That was the reason for my enthusiasm for taking up the matter with the esteemed office. And that is the reason for the depression I underwent when the highest office of the land also acted like the ordinary offices. I was sure that after cases like that of Satyendra Dubey coming to light the office would have become quite concerned in tackling the cases of complaints involving misuse of authority in public offices. The attitude of that office shattered me to the extent that I began to think about uselessness of life in such atmosphere. Was this the cause for which scores of our leaders laid their lives? True, the magnitude of irregularities in my office was not as big as is seen in 'lucrative' public offices. The reason for it was not that the head was comparatively less corrupt but that there was no scope for such a magnificent scandals in this office. And is misusing of authority for abstaining an employee from working in accordance with the rules and forcing him to cooperate in misappropriations not a matter of concern? A person who is head of an institution is supposed

to be a role model for the lower staff. If he indulges in pressurizing the people even for his petty benefits then what impression the lower staff would get? Does his indulgence in visible small embezzlements not reflect his doubtful integrity in the matters which are not possible to bring to light? I had offered my cooperation in digging out such transactions. But he was given a clean chit without even letting me know what clarification he had given for my allegations. In the fit of depression I sent a letter that I was so perturbed with the indifferent attitude of the highest office of the land that I did not feel like continue living in such atmosphere and would like to end my life at an appropriate time and place. Even that letter was forwarded to the same ministry, this time without sending me any copy of the endorsement letter, as was being done earlier, who informed me that nothing shady had been found against the accused and that no further communication from me shall be entertained.

My experiences as mentioned above may seem frustrating to a young person not yet confronted with such harsh realities. But it is not as horrible as of many other people confronted with more unfortunate circumstances. Inhumane torture of some innocents for extracting confessions, framing of complainants for exerting pressure for withdrawal of their complaints etc. are the real examples of sufferings beyond comparison. Elimination of adversaries in fake encounters, extending of helping hand to communal rioters and their subsequent protection are the real blots in the face of democracies. When the abettors of such crimes can escape punishment owing to their influence in the corridors of power then what attention the minor sufferings of a common man, especially the ones which are not sensational enough to grab attention of the media, can fetch? So should then the frauds and embezzlements of low magnitude be ignored and only the

ones involving very high volumes be tackled? Our general mindset is such that we condemn the policy of catching the small fish if big sharks are not caught. What we forget is that a large number of small fish can cause more damage than a few big ones. This is not an argument in favour of sparing the big players. But tackling of high level corruption, or inability to tackle it, should not be an argument for ignoring it at lower level. Corruption at low level serves as launching pad for reaching it at higher levels. We have already reached a level where the society has started accepting this menace as a part of life. The officials indulging in it neither feel guilty at the time of indulgence nor embarrassed in case of exposure. Their families, in stead of feeling ashamed of being related to such people, boast of the power and status of their dear ones and use it for building their own big image or for scaring the general public. This trend encourages the general public to shun the virtue of truth in favour of the benefits of falsehood. How shameful is it that we have slipped to 87<sup>th</sup> position in Global Honesty Index by scoring only 3.3 points out of possible 10, implying that every third Indian is corrupt. The actual fact is that a majority of the balance two third are not so because they don't get a chance. It is a common saying in govt. offices that honest are only those public officers who do not get a chance for corruption. Some of us may have a little consolation with 91 countries below than ours. But taking into consideration the level prevailing here either there is some flaw in the study or, if so many countries are below us, there is an urgent need of tackling this menace at international level. The situation can no longer be used as an excuse for carelessness towards the issue.

Is there no solution to tame this monster? Would any efforts to eradicate it be a failure. I am not that pessimist to resign to this negative thinking. And so is the thinking of a majority of

general public, even though we hear from almost one and all that the situation is beyond control. I also do not agree that the findings of Transparency International should imply that every third Indian is corrupt. This may be true for the public servants, rather it is an understatement in their case. But the general public is not a willing participant in its spreading. Majority of the people pay the bribes under compulsion while only a few shrewd people exploit the situation for mutual benefits when they manage the public authorities to help them in public loot in return for their share in the booty. Although the corruption is still on the rise, yet its multiplication to this level is not due to willingness of the general public. It may be due to the resonance associated with it. An honest person living in a corrupt society has tendency to become corrupt himself, or, if not, become indifferent to it. Similarly a corrupt man shifted to an environment of honesty is sure to improve, barring, however, a few exceptions. Reason for common man becoming indulgent in dishonesty or indifferent to it is because he sees others indulging and benefitting from it. If the situation is reversed then majority would shift towards honesty. If the public starts looking at the corrupt people with disdain, like it looks at and behaves with the thieves, burglars and pick-pockets, these people would also not dare indulge in the activity, which, I think, is far more condemnable than the acts of general thieves, as these people also assassinate the trust of public in addition to the burglary they commit.