

For stopping corruption reduce greed^{1*}

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On Sunday 28 August 2011 Anna Hazare broke his 13 day fast amidst great jubilation at Ramlila Grounds and elsewhere in the country. Most of the media and some of his associates called it a major victory for fighting corruption while other's termed it as a shallow one and a circus with no promise of strong Jan Lok Pal Bill in sight. The truth lies somewhere in between.

Nevertheless one tangible outcome of Anna's fast was that it brought into forefront the public anger against corruption-something that was long known but was simmering below the surface. It also allowed youth to be a part of a national movement-something they had not done before for a long time.

However a sad aspect of this *tamasha* was the capitulation of a weak and inept governing leadership and its confused response to Anna's movement. Thus the so called "mass movement" fueled by media frenzy was able to dictate and force some sort of action from the Parliament without MPs doing due diligence. This taste of blood may open up a Pandora's Box and in future similar agitations may force other issues to be passed in hurry in the Parliament.

The first casualty of corruption is governance. In a democracy due diligence and debate in the Parliament is the only way to bring in changes and new laws. Because of lack of governance the Parliament has ceased to function in a mature and sensible way and hence the general anger and frustration of common people and team Anna.

I feel corruption cannot be stopped only by making better and harsher laws. There are already enough laws to stop corruption provided they are implemented properly – something that can only happen when there is proper governance. A better way to reduce corruption is for each of us to look inwards to reduce our greed. With reduced greed and better implementation of existing laws corruption can be effectively capped.

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Besides fuelling corruption, greed for resources and materials is also creating an unsustainable lifestyle. For example most Indians aspire to have a lifestyle of western nations which is consumptive, energy-intensive and unsustainable. In the U.S. the per capita energy consumption is 350 GJ/yr, whereas in India it is a low of 18 GJ/yr. If each citizen of India tries to live an American lifestyle then the whole world's energy and material resources will be needed just for India.

I believe an [emotionally satisfying and decent lifestyle is possible](#) with much less energy consumption of 40-60 GJ/person/yr or one-seventh that of the US. This type of energy consumption will put much less pressure on earth's resources and reduce substantially the environmental pollution. However this can be possible only if we reduce our greed by becoming spiritual and follow the maxim of "simple living and high thinking".

So what is the basis of greed and how can it be reduced?

The basis of greed is desire. Desire manifests itself in different forms like lust, aim, ambition, control, goal, etc. However, the driving force is the same – power, fame and money and I think it ultimately boils down to control and hence power.

As our brains develop right from our birth, the fast expanding neuron numbers have to form memory pathways. This process is accomplished by sensory perception where the inputs from the senses help form the memory. We are therefore hardwired to increase our experience and memories and this is the basis of desire.

One of the outcomes of desire is possession. We feel a need to possess whatever we desire whether it is a person, object or even an idea. Possession helps in maximization of experience. As we absorb "experience" through our senses, the brain processes this information. It is during this process that we "decide" whether our desires are fulfilled or not. Fulfillment of desires therefore helps us in releasing the "possessions".

Unfulfilled desires lead to frustration and a need to be more possessive. This leads eventually to more control and greed which is the major cause of corruption.

Desire is a useful and necessary emotion. It allows us to achieve something and be active. Without desire we will be lifeless, dead or like stones.

However what we need to do is to satiate or channel our desires so that they get fulfilled without too much taxing of resources, materials and energy.

A powerful processor or the mind can get its desires fulfilled quite easily without physically possessing the objects of desire since it can effectively evaluate all choices and resolve issues regarding consumptive lifestyle. For example we can wear only one shirt and one pant at a time so what is the need to have 100 shirts and pants? Similarly we can live in one house or drive one car at a time. So what is the need to have many houses and a dozen cars? A powerful mind can resolve these issues and help us lead a sustainable lifestyle. While on the other hand a weaker brain needs to possess a lot more things for fulfillment of desires and this leads to greed.

When one concentrates on a single thought regularly and continuously for a long time it helps in producing a powerful mind and is the essence of Yoga. Such a powerful brain or processor allows us to think deeply and concentrate during which we can get "lost" in processing that information. Such a mind also makes us sensitive and humble, changes our priorities in life and helps us in focusing on getting personal happiness through mental peace rather than satisfaction of material needs. Besides such a mind [reduces our insecurities and hence gives us a feeling of calmness, well being and happiness.](#)

The insecurity of human beings comes when they have nothing to do. "An empty mind is the devil's workshop" is an old saying. Thus activities such as hoarding of wealth and material goods are the result of a shallow mind since it is driven by fear complex of loosing out or not having enough.

A powerful and a sensitive mind also becomes empathetic to its surroundings and gives rise to the desire to give back something to the society and help less fortunate fellow beings.

I believe that the whole purpose of our existence is to increase personal and societal infrastructure. Personal infrastructure includes personal health, happiness and general well being. By improving our personal "infrastructure" we become better human beings and it helps in our emotional growth and evolution. By giving back something to the society so that its "infrastructure" increases we help in mankind's evolution. Both these activities when carried out simultaneously can give us a great joy and satisfaction.

Creation of powerful mind should start from childhood when the brain power is at its peak. Thus we should consciously create in our children from

very early age the desire to read which will help them cultivate the habit of imagination and daydreaming. This will help make their minds powerful and with focus on reading, thinking and contemplation we can create better human beings who will form a gentler and more sustainable society. A small individual step for a corruption-less society therefore should start with school.

Though all members of our society need to reduce their greed for better India, corporate world has a bigger responsibility for reducing corruption. Today they are presented in pretty poor light and are considered as fueling corruption by colluding with politicians in land grabbing, shady deals and parking of their ill gotten wealth abroad, among others.

With their resources and wealth the captains of the corporate world can create conditions for jobs generation and improving the quality of life of rural poor. For this they need to reduce their greed and not get caught up in the number games such as biggest jets, highest turnover, maximum profit etc. etc.– something they can remove by cultivating a powerful processor or mind.

The corporate world can also take lessons from history of the freedom movement where major industrialists of India whole heartedly supported Gandhiji's program by providing intellectual and financial capital to it. There were many greedy industrialists and people with means during Gandhiji's time also, but he gave [them a higher purpose in life](#) of being a part of freedom movement. This helped a large population sublimate their greed for getting independence for India. I think helping the 60% rural population to improve their quality of life could be a new higher purpose.

I therefore feel that when all of us become internally secure and reduce our greed then we can give something back to the society and lay the foundation of a sustainable and corruption-less India.

(This article is based upon my public lecture entitled [“Sociobiological basis of corruption – relevance for corporate world”](#). The lecture was given in Pune on 9th August 2011)

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