

DON'T LEAVE THE CORRUPTION STORY MIDWAY

While wholeheartedly supporting Anna's principles and objectives, I would like to invoke my fundamental right to vote on the Anna issue. I am not against Anna's objectives but certainly fear the short sighted approach adopted by us while promoting "*Anti corruption movement*". While legitimately and rightly making efforts to eliminate bribe from our system by the one shot Janlokal bill formula, we completely overlooked the fact that corruption has unfortunately become a parallel economy by itself and for decades now by our own acquiesces bribe has taken a shape of our second currency. However, since we have all now unanimously taken a decision to eliminate corruption from our system, we must know our way through.

Unfortunate, but then what is the solution?, We don't get rid of corruption despite knowing its eating into our system? Step down because its become more powerful? The answer of every Indian, including me would be a resounding "NO".

The hypocritical approach and double standards towards Corruption which we adopted since ages, have landed us in a situation, where on the one hand, we have inherent hatred towards corruption but on the other hand WE ALL have at some point, given or taken bribe to get our way through. And now this menace has become an integral part of our habit, style of living, motivation, economics, governance etc.....

While pushing for implementation of the Janlok Pal bill in its present state, we must at least realize that for decades our government machinery has survived largely on Corruption. Bribe and exercise of personal discretion have acted as the lubricants of our economy. Now imagine a situation when one of the strongest pillars of our country's economy whether legitimate or illegitimate is made to fall without any substitute or viable and legitimate economic model to take its place. A gaping economic void is bound to get created. It's a crude reality, our system since ages only understood the language of corruption, and now by this drive which aims at paralyzing corruption, we must ensure that we don't end up paralyzing our own system in the bargain. No matter how strong and deterrent the laws of our nation may become, they can at best be used to punish the corrupt offenders, but can it alone eliminate the virus of corruption? What happens to the gigantic financial void and dissatisfaction that would be created by the complete elimination of our illegal parallel economy.

Janlokal Bill implemented: Corruption is eliminated.....great achievement! but now what, have we not learnt anything from our history? Even today we are struggling to reverse the "great brain drain" that has plagued our nation for decades. Spare a thought now and consider- how many intelligent and competent people will enter the public sector to serve the nation when they will remain the much poorer cousins of the private sector. Who would want to work on these subsidized salaries, who will efficiently perform duties without any further source of income, how can we expect people to be so selfless in today's time to devote themselves completely to serving the nation without even expecting

a fair return for their services. Are we trying to bridge the gap here or snap the ties holding the civil society of our nation together.

We need to accept that only money can substitute money, and therefore while we need a strong deterrent law, we also need a strong economic model to ensure smooth functioning of our system while eradicating the evil called “bribe”. What is the solution for smooth running of our government without imposing additional burdens on our citizens or public exchequer.

Corporatize (not privatize) the system: Why cant a public department be made to function like a company with the public servants having a share in the running and profits of the company/department? The motto would be clear – the more you work, the more you earn! Let it be incentive based. Lets take an example of the Delhi Development Authority, majority of public servants working in that department are perceived to be corrupt. Public at large has grievances against them as they fail to operate without there being monetary gratification. Suppose we as citizens, instead of offering bribe start giving legitimate and additional fee to a public servant for efficient execution of our work and in return we are issued a debit note which shall be used by us while seeking rebate under the tax scheme. The income earned by the official becomes absolutely white, legitimate and taxable and opens up a huge tax earning segment for the government. It is important to mention here that the tax reduction that public would expect would not cause any additional burden on the government because it would flow from the new tax sector which never existed before. Now the earning collected by the officials gets accumulated in the department fund, out of which, the department is first liable to pay the income tax to the government and remaining shall proportionately be adjusted towards the public servants as their incentives which of course would be based on efficiency level and success rate. The efficiency levels shall be assessed on the basis of mandatory feedback form to be filled in by the citizens. By adopting this model we are not only converting black money into white but are also ensuring a corruption free, efficient and profitable model for the government and the public servants on the one hand and ensuring far greater efficiency, transparency and lack of financial pressure on the citizens. A citizen should only be expected to pay upon successful and satisfactory completion of the work.

Another point to be noted is that the maximum defalcation of public funds happens on account of these impregnable and invisible coterie of perks and subsidies offered to the public servants, which though very valuable, are taken for granted and no value is actually placed on the same by the collective conscience of the public servants since the perks do not actually come into their hands directly. By adopting the aforementioned models where the public servants are brought on par with their counterparts in the private sector, these subsidies and perks would also be replaced greatly by a direct, transparent and accountable structure akin to the private sector.

For people below the poverty line there should be an economic quota where they get free government services on the basis of an identification code. We don't need a caste quota here but we definitely need an economic quota in order to do complete justice to all our citizens.

To take another example : Would you as a citizen have a problem paying a police officer Rs, 500 if he recovers something worth Rs. 10,000 stolen from you? Would it be wrong if you pay him Rs. 500 as a service charge for rendering efficient service? Think again because right now we are paying them unaccounted bribe without any proof or surety of ensuring proper service.

While debating on this issue with various people some one asked me- so whats the value of a murderer, how much should we pay if our family member is murdered in order to ensure that the heinous criminal gets behind bars. The answer is '*NOTHING*', you don't pay for crime against the nation or someone's life, liberty or person. However to ensure efficiency in such non lucrative and heinous areas, the officer who has been delegated the duty to solve the crime would be compensated by the department from the funds already collected.

When a person shows efficiency in performing the duties delegated to him, he should be compensated or else we should be willing to take the gamble of believing that '*Shabbashi*' by itself would be sufficient motivation to drive every government officer to perform his duty to the hilt. An officer who performs his duty efficiently and gets a heinous criminal behind bars, needs to be compensated more than any other person whether in the private or public domain.

By adopting deterrent laws without the support structure to fill the void, we are creating a very dangerous situation that is going to self implode in no time. We have to remove the discrimination between the public servants and the private workforce. The Govt. should be hiring the best and for that they need to provide the best financial environment to its employees. It's a self destructive position to hold onto a stance that a public servant should not and cannot be allowed to earn more. No one will be interested beyond a point and everyone would look for means and sources to satisfy their financial dissatisfaction. It would definitely defeat the purpose if only a person who is looking into revenue earning sector gets to earn and not others. Every officer who supports our nation in reducing the crime rate needs equal if not more monetary compensation to keep the drive going.

The examples only provide a birds eye view perspective to the economic model that can help our country achieve much larger goals. For all the good that the Janlokpai bill can potentially do, I really fear that it's a half baked measure that only deals with the fever and not the virus. There is too much at stake now with the country having rallied together like this for the first time since gaining independence to just take a wild swing at corruption without addressing the entire problem.

Deterrent law + Efficient economic model= Reduction of corruption rate, efficiency in services, conversion of black money into white, increasing the wealth of our economy and most importantly public satisfaction, restoration of dignity and self respect to our people and reversal of the great brain drain we have suffered all these decades. All this

while the people of this country pay less tax, face less harassment and financial burden and actually rid ourselves from the taint of corruption.....IT IS POSSIBLE.

Everything is possible in every department, to make it more efficient and corruption free, we just need the right implementation of deterrent laws along with economic reform to boost our nation's economy. Deterrent law alone without the economic model, would lead to starvation of efficient workers and officers and would paralyze our system.

I ask you a question can you work at a place where your salary is already subsidized and there is no other source of income. We are calling for trouble if we implement strict deterrent law without proper and efficient economic reform, it might just leave us without efficient officers to serve our nation.

We cant wait for another Anna to sow the seeds of white money into a land which has been rendered almost uncultivable due black money having seeped into every layer and every pore of our land, we must ensure that the coming together of our nation to back Anna's movement should not be wasted due to shortsightedness. We can bring about a change right now so lets all put our hearts and minds together, be brave enough to think out of the box and not get chained by our preconceived limitations. Lets make a real difference this time by killing the monster called black money once and for all.

Monica Lakhanpal & Vaibhav Gaggar
Monicalakhpal@yahoo.co.in