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Corruption has an insidious tendency in society, to eat into its vital components. It is no longer a matter of shame, to be accused of corrupt

practices. On the contrary, such people are held in awe, and rewarded for their ingenuity.

Thus a student sitting for an examination prays and seeks blessings to perform well in the examination, or to succeed in an interview. He even offers inducements, in the form of "panduru" to succeed.

Others turn to religion, when they are in pain, or are facing anxious moments because of ill health or tension. Thus religion, that basically teaches us to lead a pious life, has been reduced to satisfying our need, or for emotional security only.

The reason for this is the highly materialistic nature of modern society. In our

have tolerated corruption because they see it as the quickest way to accumulate wealth. Instead of fighting it they scramble to be part of it. But they forget that they are creating serious problems down the road that will affect them directly or indirectly. For example when ordinary people fall sick, they do not get good health care because the money to buy medicine has already disappeared into private pockets. When mothers go to maternity to deliver, there is no midwife or doctor because they were not paid and left the profession or the country or they charge a fee that may be too high. Some even defend corruption as an inte-

funds for investment in or maintenance of infrastructure such as hospitals and schools, and institutions such as research and education. Thus, acute shortages of funds, qualified and experienced personnel, are mostly functions of corruption. In turn the shortage of funds and trained manpower can lead to reduction in design and investment in capital and social infrastructure. Reduced investments in infrastructure such as hospitals and schools or maintenance of existing infrastructure and institutions can discourage private investment.

# CORRUPTION, MORAL DEPRAVITY AND OPPORTUNISM

The virtues of humility, love and compassion, have been replaced with crass hypocrisy, haughtiness and contemptuous behaviour towards people. This is done deliberately, to promote an artificial image in the eyes of the public.

Even ordinary officials, and small politicians, strut about in self-assumed importance. This hypocrisy is in turn affecting the youth, who are emulating their peers, and indulging in lies and chicanery, to show off their ill-gotten possessions.

The jealousy, resentment and competition, that it triggers leads people with meagre means, to steal and indulge in antisocial activities like drug peddling and smuggling to finance their flamboyant lifestyle.

Their wayward behaviour often leads to crimes like extortion, kidnapping and even murder. It is the extreme depravity to which our moral values have degenerated, when we find people being murdered for small pecuniary gains.

These acts are unpardonable in any religion. Nevertheless, people with such moral depravity, cannot be said to be unreligious.

On the contrary, most of these people are religious in their daily routine, like offering daily prayers, worshipping at temples, and even engaging in philanthropic activities, like giving charities or donations to religious bodies.

Their religious behaviour is a facade to hide their evil deeds, in the mistaken belief of atoning for their criminal or immoral activities. The more enterprising among them, use religion to promote their personal or political interests.

Man is by nature weak and incomplete, and hence seeks divine help to overcome this inherent weakness.

He thus embraces religion to follow a path of self-improvement, and worships in the hope of getting peace in life, and salvation after death. In a sense, religion is the love and fear of the unknown.

Its root is faith and home is the conscience. Unfortunately for us the moral values that are an integral part of any religion are rapidly deteriorating, making us religious only nominally.

We follow religious customs, as a matter of routine, a ritual, without imbibing or assimilating its virtues in our lives. We turn to religion, only when we are faced with difficulties, and uncertainties in life.

haste to acquire the material comforts of life, we have obviated the basic tenets of religion; that is morality.

We speak half-truths, or untruth, for the sake of winning an argument, a contract



or an order. Thus a salesman or a politician, resorts to making tall promises, in the hope of bagging an order, or a crucial vote.

A company makes misleading advertisements, to catch and hold the attention of the target audience. It is another matter that their products belie the claim. Worst still are dubious companies, selling spurious products, for making a quick buck, putting the lives of the innocent millions in peril.

Thus we see that our moral values have deteriorated to such an extent, that we are ready to exploit religion to serve our vested interests. We therefore find politicians, playing on the religious sensibilities of the people, for garnering more votes and consequently more power and clout.

This contradiction in our psyche, is being effectively exploited by politicians, to sow seeds of discord, leading to communal strife.

No religion preaches untruth, hypocrisy, dishonesty, violence and disharmony. The erosion of moral values that we see around us is because we do not understand our religion, and the good it stands for.

We cannot wear religion on our sleeves, to be used only at will. We must be religious in the real sense of the word, to be happy, and at peace with ourselves.

Let us turn to the issue of corruption. Corruption goes beyond merely taking public money for private use. It includes using public money to corrupt officials to take or ignore certain actions that are harmful to the economy and society.

It means relying on relatives or 'yes' men and women who will not point a finger at a problem when they see it. Many elites

gral part of rapid economic development. Yet others argue that corruption is universal, but two wrongs do not make a right. We need to have a long term view of how corruption destroys. Corruption can become endemic and institutionalized, making it the primary deterrent to economic and social development. Public money (and much of it donations for development) can not only disappear into private pockets or used to bribe officials and opinion leaders but also most of it can find its way into foreign banks.

The disappearance of funds for recurrent expenses including salaries and capital development can lead to two immediate outcomes: massive brain drain and shortage of

Lack of adequate employment opportunities in the public and private sectors can result in massive unemployment and disguised unemployment (under-employment) especially among the youth. The unemployed and under-employed have no purchasing power to induce production of goods and services.

The reduction in the production of goods and services is reflected in reduced GDP growth rate. Lack of jobs and income can aggravate absolute poverty. To make ends meet, the unemployed and poverty-stricken will resort to criminal activities and a further breakdown of morality to an even lower level.



## රණ්ඩු දඹර තැන් අමතක කරපල්ලා

"මොකේ අයිගණ්ඩි උඩ භාවක් හුවක් හැකුවා..? මං තේන් පුරුණට අඩු කොටු තනන්ට කිව්වෙත් ගිතට වේගයක් ආවද..? ඕක ගිතෙන් අකා මකා දාපත්.. මං කීවාහ වල පල්ලේ දේරි ගැහෙනකල් උඩට ආලවන්ති කියලා.. මා දං අනුරක් අතැතිව අප වෙත දුටුගෙන ආ පොඩි එකි මගෙල් මුණට එකී බලා මලින්ති දෙයට හැරී"

"මොකේ අක්කණ්ඩි උඩ අපේ අයිගණ්ඩිට ගිත කිරි ගැහෙන කතා කිව්වද..? මුණො ගිතා පොදක් හැකුවා.. ඉඳා ගල දාපත්.. මං අයිගණ්ඩිට තව ගඩා ගෙඩි ගෙනෙන් දෙකද්දැද.. ඕකිගෙ අප්පල්ලේ අරුයම ඔනොම තමා.. අයිගණ්ඩි ගිතට ගන්ට කාරි හැ.."

"හතා.. මම අයිගණ්ඩිට තේනක් පුරුමු කියලා කිව්වට අහස පොළොව ගැටලන්ට තනන්තො.. අඩි තෝ නොදන්නවාය අයිගණ්ඩිට තේන් කෙරුවාව බැරුවා කියලා.."

"මාත් ආයයි හතා අයිගණ්ඩිත් එක්ක තනි පංගලමේ ඉන්නට.. අයිගණ්ඩිගෙ සුමේ තනා කොරා දිලා.."

"ඒට පස්සේ පහු.. එතකත් ලකේට ගිතා වෙලා ඉඳු අයිගණ්ඩිත් එක්ක.. මං බොලා දෙන්නට තේනත් පැලක් තනා කරන්ට උදව් කරන්නො.."

"මේකි දොඩම් ගෙඩි දෙකක් උස හැකුවා.. අපට පැල් තනන්තට මේ මෙහ ඉඳු ගිණියමේ කැලේ රංගන්තො හැකුවා.."

"මේ අහපං අයිගණ්ඩි .. අපි පොදි ගැනුණොත් වීගැතින් පැලක් තනන්ට පුළුවන්.. ගමේ එකාල උඩට ලෙන්නෙකුඩි.. එහෙව් එකේ මොකේ බැරුවා..? උඩ මෙහෙම අහලා ගියෙහොදි අයිගණ්ඩි..?"

රණ්ඩු දඹර තැන් අමතක කරපල්ලා	කරපල්ලා
හැරැ ගොරා කුරුමානම්	අරුපල්ලා
කන්නේට පෙර මතේ කඩාඩු	බැඳුපල්ලා
පංගු ජේරු නොමැතිව් වැඩ	කරපල්ලා

"කැලේ දෙයිගම්පල්ලා මේකි මලින්තිට හපන් නොවැ.."

"උඩ ගිතුවේ අක්කණ්ඩිට වීතරු පදු ජේලි කියන්ට පුළුවන් කියලා..? හා දැන් යමේ ඉර ගල වැටෙන්නට කිරිටුඩි.. රාජ්යිගෙ අම්ම වැ කණ්ඩියට වැටුණා.. යම අක්කණ්ඩි යම.."

බෝගල