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Corruption: Nature, Causes & Remedies

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Introduction:

'Corruption' is the big problem and challenge before Indian democracy; everyone knows this problem but no one tries to solve it. Corruption is like a cancer, which every Indian must strive to cure. Corruption is widespread in India. India is ranked 85 out of 179 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, although its score has improved consistently from 2.7 in 2002 to 3.4 in 2008. Corruption has taken the role of a pervasive aspect of Indian politics and bureaucracy. The economy of India was under socialist-inspired policies for an entire generation from the 1950s until the 1980s. The economy was shackled by extensive regulation, protectionism and public ownership, leading to pervasive corruption and slow growth.

1. What is Corruption?

Way back in 200 B.C., Kautilya meticulously described 40 different kinds of corruption in his Arthashastra. He has aptly commented: "Just as it is impossible not to taste honey or poison when it is at the tip of the tongue, so it is impossible for a government servant not to eat up a bit of revenue. And just as it cannot be found out whether a fish swimming through water drinks or not so also government servants cannot be found out while taking money for themselves."¹

Corruption is an age-old phenomenon. The word corruption means destruction, ruining or spoiling a society or nation. Selfishness and greed are at the root of it; it also implies lack of integrity and honesty. "A corrupt society is characterized by immorality and lack of fear or respect for the law. When it stops valuing integrity, virtue or moral principles it starts decaying. Corruption is the abuse of public power for private gain."² Corruption comes under many different guises: bribery, misappropriations of public goods, nepotism (favoring family members for jobs and contracts), and influencing the formulation of laws or regulations for private gain.

2. Corruption in India:

Under Indian constitution, the government consists of three branches: the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary with clear mandate for independent functioning of each branch. Therefore, for good governance each of these units must function with integrity and efficiency – this is the bottom line. The legislators or law makers are elected representatives of the people – their prime job is to frame clear, simple and effective laws. The executive