

# Whether Corruption Can be eradicated: An Understanding in the framework of Swami Vivekananda's Practical Vedanta.

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“Come up, young ones of the bird of paradise,  
Before your feet touch the cesspool of corruption”

--Swami Vivekananda

Corruption is generally understood as that improper or illegal or dishonest behavior of people, which satisfies one's lust by exploiting the need of others. It (corruption) has been a major issue in social-political and economical significance in developing countries. In 1962, Government of India, observing the growing menace of corruption in administration, felt the necessity to form an Anti-Corruption Committee, named 'Santhanam Committee' according to which "corruption is improper or selfish exercise of power and influence attached to public office or the special position one occupies in public office or the special position one occupies in public life". One of the leading non-govt. organization named 'Transparency International India' defies corruption as "Misuse of public power for private benefits". Hence, needless to say that there was an enormous existence of corruption in our country since long ago. And in fact the country is still facing this issue of corruption as one of the biggest problem of the present time as its ill effect can be well traced in the current miserable condition of our country's economy.

But as we all know India's ancient wisdom is contained in its ancient scriptures such as Vedas-Upanisads, hence I would like to interrogate whether corruption is embedded in our society since that ancient times. In Rig-Veda we find a number of hymns on social unity and harmony. Rig-Veda (x, 191, 2) says "Samagacehadham Sam Vadadhvam Sam Vo manamsjanatam". It means "together walk ye, together speak

ye, together know ye your minds". It (Rig-veda) further says "Samani va akutih samana hrdayani vah samanam astu vo mano vatha vah susahasati" translated as "Let your resolve be one, let your heart be one accord, let your minds be united that your assembly may be happy". We can also mention the concept of 'Rta' that further paves the way for social unity and harmony in ancient Vedic era. 'Rta', is considered to be as the cosmic law of social, moral and physical orders, that governs the uniformities of everything. It is the eternal truth and whatever is consistent with 'Rta'(cosmic law) is vedic dharma( "Rtam, Satyam,Dharmam").So it can be said that in Vedic era or in ancient India we find a co-operative social structure for the purpose of mutual benefit and welfare and the need for renouncing our personal advantage for the sake of common good.

However, the current situation of our society is not consistent with the Rig-vedic concept of the harmonious society. Rather the society today, passing through the different social and economical structure, ultimately forgot their deep rooted way of living with the thinking of common good and the society has become indulged in individual good, individual interest and most importantly individual wealth that breeds greed and consequently we have submerged ourselves in corrupted society; submerged in corruption that poisons and divides the whole social life and generates disharmony, inequality and antagonism.

Now the question is, is there any way to deal with this problem named 'corruption'? Yes there might be several ways like economical, sociological etc. but I would like to find this answer following the paths of Ethics or Morality or to be very specific in the light of Swami Vivekananda's teachings of Ethics, Morality, Spiritualism in his 'Practical Vedanta movement'.

In late 19th century India, Swami Vivekananda initiated the 'Practical Vedanta movement' where he brought the highest teaching of Vedanta (i.e. oneness or non-difference of self and the Brahman) to be implemented or used in daily life. For centuries Vedantic principles were intended only to help people to attain 'Mukti' or Liberation. In 'Practical Vedanta' Swamiji showed that the highest principles of Vedanta can be applied in ordinary life to solve the day to day problems of individual and social life. And he further suggests that this practical application of Vedanta principles can only be possible through Self-realization (realization of the sameness of self and Brahman). And this self realization leads to moral action i.e. doing

good to others and to the society which results social unity and progress. So it can be said that Practical Vedanta ultimately aims at maintaining a state of equilibrium, synthesis, or harmony in every aspect of our society. Now in the context of Corruption as it is stated earlier that Corruption is one of the biggest hindrance for the progress of our country and it creates disharmony, division, antagonism as well, therefore the ethical teachings of Practical Vedanta (that aims at social harmony) might be a solution for it.

As we know that in order to find the solution, we must know the reason of the problem first, so here in case of Corruption too we first need to know What Swamiji would say about the root causes of Corruption following the ethics of Practical Vedanta. In Practical Vedanta we find that the word 'Corruption' is understood in a quite wider sense i. e. to say whatever is selfish or against good or unity of the society is corrupted work. And that's why it includes all the corrupted activities happening in the society today whether it is satisfying one's lust by exploiting others or taking money as bribery by the administrator or in the same way offering money to the administrator or any public officials as bribery. All these activities are according to him Selfish and weak and by that logic Immoral. Hence, he says "the only definition that can be given of morality is this: that which is selfish is immoral and that which is unselfish is moral." Now let's find out the reasons, that Swamiji would say, are behind a corrupted mind and a corrupted society. In his Practical Vedanta Swamiji speaks of two tendencies of human nature: one to harmonize the ideal of Advaita Vedanta with our life and the other to elevate our life to that ideal. Swamiji says our ultimate aim should always be the second one i.e to elevate our life to the ideal to get a good life and good society. But unfortunately we always tend to follow the path of harmonizing the ideal with our life and consequently come across different adverse effects of our lives and of society. However, if we now link this concept of Swamiji in the context of corruption then the situation might be observed as follows: The ideal of keeping wealth should be in accordance with one's legitimate or right limit of requirements and the remaining should be given to the society as social service. And if we could elevate our financial tendencies towards this ideal way then there should not be any case of exploiting others or keeping wealth in abundance. But the actuality is that Man is always running after more and more money and wealth. And it is because we failed to elevate our financial urge towards the ideal in our actual life and instead we tend to harmonize the ideal with the temptation of wealth in our life and as a result of which greed generates and greed breeds corruption. Here one may argue,

isn't it justified to keep one's own property for their own prosperity and wellbeing? Swamiji would say in reply following the Indian ethical concept of 'purusartha' that human actions of 'Artha'(wealth creation) and 'Kama'(enjoyment and pleasure) though perfectly legitimate, it should be within the bonds of Dharma. And Dharma is for Swamiji doing good to others, charity towards men and society. Unfortunately in every case where corruption occurs we fail to lead our path towards Dharma and instead tempted by our passions. But for what reason these temptations dominate our mind? Swamiji would say that it is because of our weakness, weakness of mind or weakness of self. A weak mind or self always have a sense of deficiency, sense of dissatisfaction, impurity, imperfection. A weak man possesses a lack of faith in himself and according to Swamiji, "A man who doesn't believe in himself is an atheist". Man becomes greedy as he doesn't believe that he is complete within himself, so he doesn't need anything from the material world (whether it is money or anything else) to be happy or to have contentment. So to become greedy is to become weak or not having the self-realization. And who doesn't have the self-realization is not going to stay in the world with peace of mind. Swamiji rightly said "whatever is weak and corrupt is liable to die". Moreover, Selfishness is also a weakness of our mind. 'Selfish-ness'(the attitude of 'Love for only one's own self' and 'Hate for others') also encourages us to exploit others . Selfish man thinks that as he doesn't love the other person, he can exploit him to fulfill his own lust. It is known that the public officials or the persons who possess any kind of public power or the administrators play an important role in corruption, so it is necessary to know What Swamiji would say regarding the administrators who are corrupted. Swamiji says that the corrupted administrators do not possess right values, specially the value of sympathy or the value of feeling for others.

So far we have stated the root causes of corruption in our society following Swamiji's ethical teaching in his Practical Vedanta. Now to move on with the solution part. From the previous discussion it is explicit that for the solution of this massive issue Swamiji would say that we need to educate our mind in a proper way that leads to spiritualism, oneness, non-difference. Hence the next part of this paper would be an attempt to find from Swamiji's teachings how this kind of spiritualistic training of human mind helps the society to eradicate corruption. Swamiji told "every work we do, bears an impression on the mind and man's character is determined by the sum total of these mental impressions. If good impression prevail, the character becomes good which is necessary to make every person and the nation great". Hence it is very important to inculcate

high moral values to our minds. If we have moral values in our mind then naturally we are not going to hurt anyone. In Practical Vedanta 'tat tvam asi translated as 'you are the divine' is said to be the highest moral principle or it is the essence of Vedanta. 'Tat' means the ultimate reality Brahman. 'Tvam' means Self or Atman. The meaning is that the self in its original, pure, primordial state is wholly or partially identical with the ultimate reality. So now if we can inculcate this highest moral value of non-duality or oneness in our mind, we will never think about doing harm to others because there will be then no gap between the ideal and the actual life and consequently there won't be any case of exploitation. At this point we now need to know the steps of mind training system given by Swamiji for engraining the highest principle of morality. The first and foremost step according to Swamiji is to make our mind utmost calm. He says "It is the calm mind that does the great work". Swamiji then suggests the next step as to remove all the negative thoughts from the mind and instead always try to remember you are pure, perfect and everything is within yourself. If you continue this it will work like medicine to your disease called 'weakness' and you will get back your inner-strength and consequently you would start to believe in yourself meaning believing in the glory of your own self. Now at this point Swamiji suggests to follow the Upanisadic method of Shrabana manana and nididhyasana. According to which you need to hear continuously that 'you are that perfect divine soul'. Then you need to think on it day and night and finally meditate upon it. Hence Swamiji says "this Atman is first to be heard of. Hear day and night you are that soul. Repeat it to yourselves day and night till it enters into your veins, till it is in your flesh and bone. Let the whole body be full of that one ideal, I am birthless, the deathless, the blissful, the omniscient, the omnipotent, ever-glorious soul. Think on it day and night, think on it till it becomes part and parcel of your life. Meditate upon it and out of that will come work". So if we can train our mind in this way we would definitely be able to inculcate the highest principle into our minds and as a resultant of which all our actions will be magnified, transformed, deified by the very power of thought or the thought of our almightiness, our majesty and our glory and especially our togetherness and unity with all the others of the society and ultimately we will refrain ourselves from doing all the evil or dishonest work like corruption and we will develop such an elevated mind that only thinks of doing good to others. At this level there will be no sense of discrimination and multiplicity in our mind, but we will feel only unity and love and oneness. We become one with our family, city and with the whole world and we will realize that

the difference is only in degree but in reality we are the manifestation of that One. And once you can subjugate your mind in this way you will start to treat the other people of the society as an end, but never as a means of your selfish act. And in this state of mind men will engage themselves in their ultimate moral duty i. e. renunciation and charity. Swamiji had exhorted the people of India to make renunciation or tyaga and service or seva as the basis of our social relationships. If these values exist in the practical conduct of men, men can be taught to dedicate oneself for the good of all. Swamiji had observed centuries of exploitation in Indian society by foreigners, by our own people, exploitation of weak by the strong on social, political ,economic fronts ,hence he was of the view that attitude of charity should be practiced. And he further adds that charity should be made with sraddha, with modesty, with fear implying that what you give may be too small for the purpose, and with understanding the purpose and social relevance of the charity. Thus, according to him renunciation of the little self manifests higher self. But the feeling of charity can only come when a person has feeling for others or possesses the quality of sympathy for others. Swamiji felt that if all the administrators of our country would have possessed the quality of sympathy, our country would not have been so much corrupted or exploited. The administrators' responsibility towards society is much greater than that of the ordinary citizens because they are entrusted with the task of managing the affairs of society of which the welfare of people is an integral part. So administrators should develop the quality of sympathy, which is the impulse of actual going to the suffering men and to working hard to put an end to the deprived condition of our people. Swamiji further speaks of other two qualities that administrators should acquire, they are Pravritti and Nivritti. Pravritti is outward directed action and Nivritti is inward directed meditation. Both these together are means of Abhayudaya or social welfare and nihsreyasa or spiritual growth and fulfillment of all beings. For the achievement of the noble goal of social welfare the administrators must cultivate an elevated sense of duty and indomitable inner strength and perseverance as well. Therefore, from the above illustration we should reach the stage to get control over our (the ordinary citizens as well as the administrators) mind, so that our mind can feel for others, feel the oneness with all and everything that ultimately leads to a united, harmonious society where there will be no place for any kind of dishonesty, any kind of deception, any kind of corruption and that's what Swamiji had always thought of.

Now here in the conclusion of my paper I would mention the work system of 'Ramkrishna Mission' in brief as an evidence to show how an organization could be corruption free following the path of spiritualism. In the year 1897 Swami Vivekananda founded 'Ramkrishna Mission' to replicate his master Sri Ramkrishna's vision and broadcast its message of universal love, brotherhood to the whole world. The aims and ideals of the Mission are purely spiritual and humanitarian and has no connection with politics..Today there are more than hundred centres of Ramkrishna Mission all over India engaged in medical , educational, religious and relief activities And all the service activities of the Mission are based on the message of sri Ramkrishna i.e. "Jiva is Shiva"and of the messages of Swamiji that are "Daridra Narayan(service to poor is service to God)" and "renunciation and service". . Through Mission;s work Swamiji reformulated the abstract vedantic percepts into concrete moral practices. He specified some strict principles for the Mission since the beginning and proclaimed its motto as "Atmano Mokshartham Jagad-hitaya cha" translated as "For one's own salvation, and for the good of the world ". Now coming to the administrative part of the Mission. The administration of the mission is purely democratic. All the centre of Ramkrishna Mission is administered by a democratically elected Governing body, composed of the trustees, who all are themselves Monks. A representative meeting of all Monks is held every three years when the report of all the activities of the organization are approved and guidance sought for further development. The principal workers of the Mission are the Monks. And since the beginning they are they are trained in a certain way for their ordination (Sannyasa). During the first year of his stay at any centre he is treated as a pre-probationer, and for the next four years as a probationer. At the end of this period he is ordained into celibacy (Brahmacharya) and is given certain vows (pratijna) that includes honest brotherhood, eschew lust and greed, seeking liberation from Motto, chastity ,renunciation and service. After a further period of four years he is ordained into (Sannyasa) and he is given the ocher(Gerua) clothes to wear. Hence to be Monk or to be one among the management committee's members of Ramkrishna Mission is not at all an easy task. Swamiji himself prepared the ethical and spiritual base of Ramkrishna Mission, Swamiji's ideology is strongly rooted in every single work of the Mission. So, the Mission which teaches, preaches, practices and follows Swamiji's teachings how can it be corrupted? And perhaps that's why till date when the whole world more or less is

plagued by Corruption, Ramkrishna mission is well known to be a corruption free organization ,it still carries the bastion of light and the flag of a corruption free society.

Now finally at this very end of my paper a much relevant question is needed to be arisen i.e. Is eradicating corruption a myth or reality? Answer is If we believe corruption can be eliminated, it can be; if not, it will remain a reality. When Vivekananda went to meet Ramakrishna Paramhansa, he asked directly, 'Does God exist? Do you believe in Him?' Ramakrishna Paramhansa supposedly replied, 'Yes, not only do I believe in Him, but I can also make you see Him?' Vivekananda has also described the experience where as Ramakrishna touched him, he felt the presence of God.

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