

IN SEARCH OF HONESTY

In ancient Greece, sage Diogenes moved with a lantern in broad daylight in search of an honest person. Since then science has made magnificent strides but all of them are useless as far as the search of honesty goes. Beneficiaries of rule of law contend that a court verdict is a conclusive proof of honesty. People flatly reject the contention as they find that what is legally honest is factually dishonest. Legal certificates of honesty, public believes, are

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nothing but confirmation of factual dishonesty. Therefore, the rule of law invokes the law of defamation. That too fails to impress. People point out that just as beauty cannot be acquired through beauty parlours, fame cannot be acquired through the law of defamation.

Honesty, says wisdom, is the best policy. Dishonesty, tells experience, brings prosperity. What stands between realism and wisdom? Business and honesty are poles apart. Mahatma Gandhi was one of rare thinkers gifted with ability to see the things as they are and courage to call a spade a spade. Strangely, Gandhi invented the theory of trusteeship in defence of dishonesty in business. His theory is based upon the principle "enjoy by renouncing". Why make millions by cheating and then renounce them? Gandhi had no answer. When asked to name any businessmen whom he would call a "trustee", Gandhi's answer was

"none".

To expect honesty from persons in public office is as absurd as expecting chastity from prostitutes. If the prostitutes object to equating them with public officials and consider it an unjustified insult, their objection would be totally valid. Prostitutes are victims of compulsion. In world history, so far none has been compelled to hold public office. All have usurped it. Every king has been a successful robber in the first instance. The blood of robber became royal blood when robbery continued in the family continuously for four generations. Smaller robbers settled as feudal lords.

The times change. Monarchy and aristocracy have been replaced by democracy. Chivalry is replaced by chicanery. The usurpation is legitimised through elections and nominations. But central fact of robbery remains unchanged. Everywhere on earth public office is coveted for private gains. In our times the rulers are keen to banish poverty from their lands. They, therefore, concentrate on development. The business of development is highly lucrative. Every year the turnover runs into thousands of crores of rupees. New types of business such as smuggling emerge. Success in development enterprises depends upon close comradeship between those in business and those in power.

Cheating and stealing are the pillars of every social structure whose foundation is exploitation. Different forms of government prevailing

in different States of world are only different forms of exploitation. Everywhere the money-makers and rulers are the controllers of opportunities and wealth. The bureaucrats and professionals can achieve their goals only by slogging for them. They do the dirty work inevitable in the management of money and power.

A nation does not suffer as much by dishonesty in other fields as in education. Dishonesty in education is a cancer to the nation. Excellent education is impossible without excellent educationists. Such educationists have become as rare as the Gir lions. The powers that be patronise educationists who dance to their tune. In ancient India power saluted knowledge because the Gurus were wisdom incarnate. In modern India knowledge kneels before power because the Gurus are degenerate. An impeccable source informs that in India the highest position in education go to the Doctors in Dishonesty.

Now a days the educationists do not spend their time and talents on scaling the highest peaks of excellence but on games in one upmanship.

They faithfully remember the birthdays of governors, chief ministers and their wives and religiously join the queue to register their attendance. Funds allotted for education are used by them to organise functions to felicitate their political masters. The doorkeepers at the offices and residences of governors and ministers feel pity for to-day's Gurus hanging before the swinging

doors. How can such educationists inspire excellence in their institutions, command respect or mould the character of their students?

Servile themselves, they demand servility down the line. Just as water finds its level, presiding sycophant finds his. The aim of educational autonomy is to protect and promote academic excellence and freedom. But autonomy has become autocracy of mediocrity. The teachers find that it is not dedication to knowledge but sycophancy of the presiding sycophants that guarantees positions, quick promotions and prosperity. Temple of learning become a racecourse where goes a rat race for appointments, promotions, positions and membership of councils and committees. The favourites are rewarded with regular pleasure trips within the country and abroad under the pretext of study tours, seminars and conferences where nothing worthwhile is done.

The students in the temples of learning are not at all deceived by the sermons preached. They digest the gospel of dishonesty practised by the high priests and use it in the professions, occupations and trade they choose. The founding fathers took for the nation's crest only the first part of Sanskrit saying: *Satyameva Jayate, Na Anritam*—only Truth triumphs, never lies. Forty years of Swaraj shows that so-called eminent and prominent citizens of India act exactly opposite. While only lies triumph, dishonesty grows and search for honesty becomes as futile as the mission of Diogenes.