

THIRUVALLUVAR ON CORRUPTION - FREE SOCIETY

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Thiruvalluvar (shortly known as Valluvar) presented the ethical classic Thirukkural 2000 Years ago. Bharathiar, the National poet of the Indian freedom struggle sang with delight that Tamilnadu is the territory which has attained glory, sky high, by presenting Valluvar to the world. Dr.G.U.Pope, the Christian missionary in India during the British rule who translated Thirukkural into English proclaimed that Thiruvalluvar was the bard of the universal man.

Thiruvalluvar has not imagined a Utopia or a heaven for the human beings to aspire for. He has not dwelt upon any abstract thought or dogma. He is out and out concerned with the practical world wherein despicable as well as noble, the begging lot as well as the wealthy lords, hypocrites as well as the honest are dwelling side by side.

He is solely concerned with the present world. To him how one is living in present is His matter of supreme importance. He advocates strenuous efforts as the criterion of one's life, irrespective of whether one succeeds or not.

The whole classic of Thirukkural is inter-woven with 'arram', the power of goodness. Arram is omnipresent and omnipotent, controlling all living beings and maintaining goodness among them. Thiruvalluvar emphasizes mental purity as arram. If one is spotless in mind, that much is enough for one to fulfil the obligations towards 'arram', the power of goodness.

Thiruvalluvar has allotted one chapter in his classic, Thirukkural for advising man not to covet another's wealth. Covetousness as referred to by Thiruvalluvar, 2000 years ago is similar to corruption which has got prominence in the modern days. Thiruvalluvar is very sharp when he speaks about this social evil. He says that if one covets another's well earned property without any sense of equity, one's home will be spoiled and quilt will accrue forthwith. (Kural:171). He advises not to aspire for the gain of covetousness, saying that the resultant gain will never be good (177). Hence he proclaims that covetousness will lead one to ruin and that the pride of desirelessness to triumph. (180).

Generation by generation the human society is getting degraded because of the selfish mentality of man which has grown very badly. As a result, the covetousness and corruption have grown enormously nowadays.

This paper attempts to study the concept of Thiruvalluvar with regard to corruption and understand this burning issue in proper perspective and try to find out ways and means to cleanse the human mind and to make the society corruption - free.

There are people who would blame that the bureaucracy is corrupting the politicians while some others argue that it is only the politicians who are the root cause of corruption.

Corruption is not confined to government organizations alone. It is flourishing everywhere in this competitive world. In the post independent India it is rampant. Some fifty years ago corrupt person could not get respect from the society. It would be looked down upon and even condemned by the people. But that condition has been mostly changed. Affluent people are now given utmost respect in society. The society

does not bother about the source from which the affluence has accrued. This is a major reason why the corrupt persons proceed thoughtlessly in their corrupt practices without any hesitation.

Thiruvalluvar does not differentiate between career administrators and political administrators as far as the purity of action is concerned.

It is out of extensive interactions between the bureaucrats, political administrators and citizens of various walks of life that there are distilled pragmatic thoughtways and workways and a culture acceptable to the society. Out of mis whole comes something that no individual can provide.

As for the corruption in public administration or among the politicians, neither the bureaucracy nor the politicians can be held solely responsible. The social evil of corruption in a country has to be understood as the reflection of the actual condition of the society, or as the indicator of the actual mentality at the people of the country.

What has Thiruvalluvar to say about the country being contaminated through this, evil? Valluvar says that the good conduct or otherwise of the people depends upon the conduct of the sincere and hard workers.

*Let the king (head administrator) look to the actionist
and take care of him day in and day out;
if the actionist is unbent*

the world would never become crooked (Kural: 520)

Sincere and hard working man, shortly called the actionist, will be particular only in obtaining job satisfaction with their sense of dedication to the work on hand. He will not tend to become fraudulent. Only the hypocrites who will pretend to be duty conscious, but who will be mostly interested in searching out some shortcut ways and means for making money are the corrupt people.

If such people are allowed to flourish freely while the sincere and hard working actionists are let stranded in humiliating conditions, the character and conduct of the actionists will get weakened and their upright conduct may not be kept up. It is likely to be bent. In that case the country is bound to become crooked.

Hence what Valluvar advises is that the head administrator should identify the real actionist, recognize his dedication towards the official goal and take care of his welfare. With this understanding of the concept of Valluvar, we can understand why Valluvar gives so high an esteem to the tillers of land who produce food grains for the coimlry, by (oiling hard, he says that the tillers are like the axle-pin of the world since they are bearing all the others who are not in a position to do agriculture. (1032).

Positive qualities towards the power of goodness (arram) will be inherent with the -sincere and hard working people. The tillers will not beg from others nor hoard their produce. They will readily give it to the needy (1035)

The tillers are persistently engaged in agriculture. They should be duly recognized. They are the people to be guarded against the exploiting traders and middle men who are mostly responsible for the prevailing inertia to which the farmers are subjected without any progress in their economical condition. For the food grains produced by the farmers it is only the traders who fix the price. Is it not the duty of the government to check this exploitation and arrest it?

Thiruvalluvar has mentioned only the tillers as the toiling ones according to his life-time which was 2000 years ago. But in the present context the actionists as

referred to by Thiruvalluvar will denote not only the tillers of land but all the other toiling men among the labourers in factories, mill-workers and others who exert hard in various jobs. The actionists are also the executives and office staff who work sincerely and honestly. Whoever the actionists may be, they should be taken care of and guarded so that nobody can exploit their toiling potentiality.

society

This is the most important factor of management in any organization or for maintaining the morale and keeping the country corruption-free.

This factor is ignored in India. In the government organizations only the hypocrites are flourishing and the sincere workers are simply ignored. This condition is prevailing in the political field very alarmingly. The corrupt persons who have amassed wealth are respected by the society. Hence corruption finds place everywhere in India. An international organization namely, the "Transparency International" formed recently for the purpose of assessing the degree of corruption in 62 countries undertook survey and gave India 3rd rank with respect to the degree of corruption. It has shown that India is nearing the saturation status in corruption.

It is the inertia formed in an organization or society which acts as the promoter of negative qualities therein.

What is inertia? In scientific terms, inertia is a property of matter by which a body at rest continues to do so unless acted upon by an external force. From a psychological point of view, this is an inertia of dormancy or indifference, the desire to remain undisturbed.

The scientific definition further says that a body that is moving in particular direction will continue to move in the same direction unless acted upon by an external force. A person may be doing the same thing for a number of years without any break, but that by itself does not mean that he is free from inertia.

As organization in which heavy inertia has accumulated can be termed as a corrupt organization which has lost its purity. It has settled down in a rut, whether of activity or non-activity. Such an organization invariably develops a resistance to all tendency that seeks to disturb its continuity.

The inertia that is formed in an organization is imparted to it by its constituent members. A corrupt individual will impart corruption to the organization by making it a field of self-fulfillment - by seeking prestige, then position and ultimately power. It is through seeking power, positively or negatively, that there arise jealousy and envy among the members of the organization.

Only if an organization becomes a field of observation instead of the field self-fulfillment, will it serve as a channel for communicating the pure and living waters of life to all those who suffer and who are deep in psychological agony.

The inertia should not be allowed to continue without break. Here is Valluvar's advice in this respect.

*The country of the king (Head administrator)
Who fails to exercise his comprehensive judgement
by taking into account the daily happenings
of the good as well as the bad
will go to decay.*

(Kural 553)

The political administrative head must act as the external force with clear understanding of the prevailing situation, and" by enforcing his comprehensive judgements thereupon and try to break the continuity causing inertia.

For every office the controlling officer, and for a particular department the concerned secretary to government and for the secretary to government the minister holding the particular portfolio will act as the external force in order to break the inertia, if any. Here the line of control has to be strictly followed. But nowadays the minister or the secretary to government or the departmental head ignores the line of control and tends to have direct contact with the officers down below his immediate subordinate. This will indicate only his vested interest against his legitimate duties and responsibilities.

Strict enforcement of rules and regulations by the government will go a long way in arresting corruption. It is not the fault but the duty of the government to guard and cherish the citizens and to punish the criminals. (549) Punishing the wicked criminals even with death is like weeding the productive crops by the farmer (550).

The 'Transparency International' has found out that in Singapore the corruption is the least. Why? Because, the Government of Singapore is enforcing the law very strictly. No erring official or the citizen can escape there without punishment. There is no chance for the inertia to be formed in Singapore either in the administration or among the citizens.

Now let us consider the ways and means to keep our society, corruption-free through, the concept of Thiruvalluvar. Valluvar does not advocate any missionary movement. He believes only in the individual transformation. He is not for any regimentation of any one section of the population for the purpose of transforming the whole lot.

For all the evils in the present world the distortion of the sense of value or the faulty sensing of values is the root cause. Only because of his faulty sensing of values the man has become mad in running after wealth until his last breath. The worldly truth is that even for those who amass wealth to the tune of crores, their enjoyment is rarely possible except as determined by the ordainer, the rhythm of Nature. (377)

The very attitude of containing himself in the contentment in life is valued as the power of goodness (arram) by Valluvar. In the absence of this attitude one will resort to covet the property of others. And such people will adopt fraudulent practices. Vices, deceit, hiding, hoarding, etc will overwhelm their life.

Thiruvalluvar is concerned more and more about man's positive attitudes with respect to the power of goodness. The power of goodness abides in the heart of those who are accustomed to measured life. So will deceit dwell in the minds of them who are conversant with fraudulent design. (288) To gather wealth in fraudulent means and to preserve it is just like storing water in a mud-pot which is not baked. (660) Thiruvalluvar categorically declares that the extreme poverty of the upright is supreme to the wealth amassed through dishonorable means by heaping up sinful deeds. (651)

Thiruvalluvar gives a very great significance to human endeavour with perseverance. Thirukkural is a monument from which humanity can derive enormous confidence in its exertion. He gives high esteem to the tillers of land who produce food grains for the country by their hard labour. The tillers live in tune with nature. They exert hard and produce more. They would entertain guests and exercise

hospitality. They would never lack in humanism. Due to manly exertion they would enjoy good health. They would never think of any deceit even in dreams. This culture must be encouraged to be maintained constantly by the administration by guarding the tillers and all other sincere and hard working people against the exploitation by the middle men and hypocrites. This is the major advice given by Valluvar to undo the corrupt mentality from the human society.

The distorted sense of value must be set right in society for which the moral values have to be taught impressively to the children in schools. The concept of Thiruvalluvar on the wholesome life within the realm of arram, the power of goodness may be implanted in the tender minds of the children. This will go a long way in correcting the sense of value of the people in due course.

Awareness against the impure practices like corruption has to be awakened among the people. Writers and thinkers and voluntary organizations should all rise up to the occasion. Persistent attempts have to be made to build up the awareness in society so as to renew the culture in which the corrupt and impure persons in public administration, political field and in all other walks of life are not respected but condemned. Then only the corrupt people will begin to understand the folly of their impure life and begin to rectify themselves.

In countries like India a self appraisal has to be made by the government and assess the actual benefits derived by the masses and by the privileged few. After independence India adopted the Western model of industrialization. Though we succeeded remarkably in this venture, the major benefits of industrialization did not reach the masses. The disparity between the privileged and the non-privileged has increased steeply. Too many advantages have been heaped upon those already in the privileged class, through higher tariffs and increased subsidies and by permitting organized monopolies, price-fixing and other forms of exploitation of the masses. The huge disparity between the privileged and the unprivileged people is one of the major factors causing corrupt practices in society.

In order to make the benefits go to the unprivileged and underprivileged people, countries like India have to adopt a policy which would emphasize large scale employment, supplement agriculture, adopt micro-level planning and technology appropriate to the socio-cultural situations. Thiruvalluvar says that even though the technical know-how of modern technology is known well, the inherent attitude and the actual prevailing condition of the State should be thoroughly understood and that the technology be put to application accordingly (637).

As per the modern biological, psychological, sociological and genetic learning, it is found that the human potentiality is spread widely in humanity throughout the world. Only united action through the common instrumentality of government can maximize and hasten the development of the strength and competence of the masses.

Hard work and human endeavour should be esteemed high in society and the State. Then only humanism will flourish in humanity and the power goodness will embrace the society.

Here is a poem in Gitanjali of Rabindranath Tagore for which Nobel prize was awarded:

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou whorship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the parthmaker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!

Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be found? Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation ; he is bound with us all for ever.

Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense! What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained?

Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow.

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