



Responses to Manushi

Corruption in Government

In the article *Naukri as Property* in Issue no. 100, Madhu Kishwar has given voice to the anger of all patriotic citizens at the frightening scale of corruption in government and semigovernmental organizations. In large measure the points made by her are valid. It is, however, most unfair to brand all government servants as idlers and corrupt.

If, as claimed by Ms. Kishwar on page 14, government jobs in this country do not involve any responsibility and if government employees just stay at home it will be a great blessing, how are the postal services, defence establishments etc. running?

During my 36 years as a railway officer it was my privilege to work with hundreds of officials at all levels who were totally dedicated and completely honest, though the percentage of such officials is fast shrinking, thanks to the examples set by our politicians and the permissive atmosphere created by innumerable scams. During my long service I put in 8 to 10 hours of work on an average day, often without seeing a full day's break for many months, thanks to the ideals imbued in me as a student-activist before 1947. I can also claim that I did not commit a single act of corruption or misuse of authority, even though I handled high value contracts and purchases. I can safely say that there are many thousands of officials in railways and other departments who can make a similar claim.

I vividly recall the proud face of the young railway sweeper at Kota station 30 years ago who, after cleaning the first class compartment of the Frontier Mail, refused the customary *baksheesh* from passengers saying *Nahinji, mujhe sarkar se vetan milta hai*. By branding all government servants as corrupt, we will be doing great injustice to thousands like him. It must also be remembered that corruption is not confined to the government sector. A good percent-age of officials in large private sector firms are also corrupt, without the fear of getting caught by the CBI. It is not difficult to be corrupt, except for the small chance of getting caught. To be honest, however, in the face of temptations and the blandishments of colleagues and superiors requires great strength of character and often the willingness to face adversity.

J.N Iyer, Chennai, Tamil Nadu

You are right. There are many number of honest, sincere people in the government whose dedication would do any institution, any country proud. However, as you 've yourself have pointed out their proportion is fast dwindling because honesty is not rewarded, crookery is. The few who somehow survive the system, are by and large marginalised. They are not effective in rehauling the work culture of their respective institutions because under the present system of governance, even highly placed bureaucrats do not really have the power or clout to effect meaningful systemic changes or

call their colleagues to account even while they have the power to do a lot of harm and can get away with a great deal of corruption.

How do we make efficiency and honesty become the average norm rather than a heroic exception? I am sure you will agree that this is the real challenge before us.

Madhu Kishwar

No Househusbands?

This is in reaction to *Happy being Housewife* by Suman Ganapathy in issue 101. Firstly, I envy her position and also feel happy that she is able to lift her chin up and able to understand her worth for all that she is doing for her family. I also feel that the word "housewife" has always been given a negative connotation. When somebody asks me are you a housewife? I say, "Yes, I am both, housewife and a professional". Every woman is a housewife, if we define it as someone who cares for the family and shares responsibility, but then mere is no word like "Househusband"! If a man is not employed or not earning, nobody asks him, are you a househusband?

Similarly quite often we hear men stating "*Meri bihi Kaam nahin karti*". You interview spouses from cross sections of the society and put a straight question "*Apaki patni kya karti hai?*" (What does your wife do?) I bet you are sure to get a typical answer: "*Voh to ji housewife hai or Voh kutch nahin karti*" (She is a housewife, she does nothing). We ourselves are responsible for these stereotypes!

Housework is no way inferior or of less value than doing a job outside for money. Raising a family is of utmost importance as the personality of children is shaped and nurtured by the parents. It is time that we realise that every woman is a working woman, some work only at home and some at two places. Those who are not going out to work and earning paypackets have tremendous scope for making their own lives meaningful and productive like Suman from Gurgaon.

Sarala Rao, Bhopal, M. P.

Medical Malfeasance

After reading the article *A Father's Crusade: The Medical Murder of Ina Raja* in issue 101, I want to bring to the notice of **Manushi** the case of my wife who expired on 4.8.97 due to the negligence of Mata Chanan Devi Hospital of Janakpuri, which killed Ina Raja as well. Gynecologists performed an operation on my wife who was stated to be suffering from pain in the abdomen due to fibroid uterus tumour and which we were told could be cured by a minor operation. But she expired on 4.8.97.

I am really traumatized and am unable to describe all that happened mostly due to my lack of medical knowledge and terminology. Therefore, I did not even know how to lodge a complaint against such medical malfeasance. I am really very grateful to **Manushi** for helping people like me by offering their valuable legal assistance.

Gurdip Singh, New Delhi

Better Work Ethic

This is in response to Madhu Kishwar's article *An Agenda For India: The Speech We Deserved To Hear On Aug 15* in issue 101. All that she has mentioned as the agenda for the country is valid and necessary. I hope that the "powers that be" are



Dheeraj Chaudhry

reading this speech she feels the prime minister should have given on August 15.

There is only one point I think she has missed out, which is the number of holidays we manage to have during the year. I believe we do not work for one third of the year. People should understand that they have to develop a better work ethic.

Zena Sorabjee, Mumbai

Mere Pieties

Madhu Kishwar in *Naukri as Property - Causes and Cures for Corruption in Government* in issue 100 clearly brings out the prevalence, rather institutionalization, of corruption in Indian governmental organisations. No two opinions on that.

While concluding the article she lists a number of suggestions, after posing the question: "How do we get things right?" Notwithstanding the soundness of suggestions (in isolation), the problem, however, remains unsolved because, given the present strength of different social forces, the suggestions cannot be implemented. The society is, ultimately, run in accordance with the balance of forces, and is not amenable to pious wishes.

It is no doubt important that corruption from the society is rooted out, and citizens are protected from unscrupulous wrong doers - whether in government or in the private sector. But, the million dollar question is: how to ensure that rational laws are enacted, and properly implemented?

To get rid of corruption in isolation is impossible. First, and foremost, the society needs to be understood in terms of social forces. And, on a large scale - in terms of time and space - any social phenomenon is the resultant, or the vectorial product of the interaction of social forces. Therefore, without changing the balance of forces - in other words, without empowering the masses - a healthy society cannot be built.

The empowerment of the people can be facilitated through the spread of literacy and education, through strengthening the forces of positive social change, through supporting democratic forces, through partisan-ship towards the disadvantaged sections of the society including women through mobilization of forces in favor of making it mandatory that there be transparent functioning at every level and in every organisation.

Hassan Abdullah, New Delhi □