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independence after having been deprived of power? Had we cared to look for answers to these questions, the task of rebuilding our nation would have been undertaken very differently: with honesty and dynamism and in a manner appropriate to our culture and traditions.

Had the fledgling nation's social, cultural, academic, economic, political and religious leaders been collectively involved in determining her future course, they would have worked together to ensure her progress. However, political power was seen as the be all and end all and other aspects of public life were ignored or relegated to the background.

Devoid of spirituality, the common man cannot lead a healthy and wholesome life. Every entity is a fusion of body, mind, intellect and soul. All the attributes of humanity – empathy, tolerance, morality, reasoning, creativity, dutifulness, integrity, affection, compassion and co-existence - are products of this fusion. These virtues represent true spirituality. Nourishing them is a task that has long been ignored. Prayer alone does not represent spirituality, without which neither individual nor society nor the nation have any hope of peace, prosperity and progress.

Political power is not capable of instilling these essential virtues in our public life. In other words, political power alone cannot ensure the all-around progress of the nation. By itself, it can only lead to conflict and a destructive mindset. Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Small wonder our polity is riddled with corruption. The sad truth is that our hard-won freedom has been sacrificed at the altar of corruption.

Corruption is all-pervasive in independent India. Even the council of ministers is not immune. In recent times, crores of rupees have been seized from the residences of top-rung administrators. To cite just one instance of massive graft, the stamp paper scam encompassed the entire country in a web of corruption. The administration didn't have the slightest clue, a telling indictment of its efficiency and will to combat corruption. Our judiciary is partly responsible. So tardy has it been in punishing the guilty that the corrupt have no fear of retribution. The result is that ordinary citizens must pay bribes in all government offices to accomplish even the most routine and minor jobs.