

'PANDIT NEHRU'S RESPONSIBLE FOR CORRUPTION TODAY'

...says Gandhi's personal secretary V Kalyanam in an exclusive to **City Express**

by **Ashok Kumar Shaw**

Chennai: Emphasising on the need to punish the corrupt, Gandhiji's former personal secretary V Kalyanam, on the eve of Gandhi Jayanthi, held the first prime minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, responsible for the growing levels of corruption in the country today.

"Corruption is maximum in this country and I hold one person responsible for it – Pandit Nehru. Corruption started immediately after Independence. During the British period, there was not much corruption. Now, it is running into crores," he said on the sidelines of a function organised to mark the launch of a website, www.gandhiworld.in, dedicated to Gandhiji.

The Gandhian, who worked as a personal secretary to Mahatma Gandhi from 1943 to 1948, claimed, "Pandit Nehru, personally, was very honest. As honest as Manmohan Singh. I also hold Manmohan Singh responsible for the present day corruption. Manmohan Singh is personally very honest. But they protected corruption. That is why I say they are all abetting corruption. If you are corrupt, they should punish you. When there are charges against you, they must immediately suspend you. Now, in 1947, we got Independence. Within a month of India's Independence, Gandhiji received 50 letters, out of which 10 complained of corruption in the country."

Recalling an incident in November 1947, three months after India's Independence, Kalyanam said a person asked Nehru about the growing levels of corruption in India. To which Nehru replied, according



V Kalyanam | MARTIN LOUIS

to Kalyanam, "I'm quoting Nehru here, 'Honourable men should not worry about a little corruption here and there.' The person gave a suitable repartee, he said, 'Sir, a little corruption is like a little pregnancy, which keeps growing.' And, see what is happening now."

Kalyanam alleged, "At that time, three persons were very corrupt. Defence Minister V K Krishna Menon, a close friend of Pandit Nehru, former Finance Minister TT Krishnamachari, and Pratap Singh Kairon, former Chief Minister of Punjab, were corrupt in the post-Independence era. But he didn't dismiss them. He continued (to have) them in the Cabinet. I hold Panditji responsible for the growing corruption now."

Sharing details of the time he spent with the Father of the Nation, Kalyanam recollected that Gandhiji had lived humbly and on simple means. "Gan-

dhiji survived on boiled rice, and *kaddu* (pumpkin), which was cheaper than other vegetables. He wanted to identify himself with the poor people in India," he said.

Also, following his own principles of non-violence, Gandhiji refused to drink cow's milk, because people told him that cows' backs were being pierced to milk them more and earn more money. "He considered this as violence on cows. Hence, he drank the milk of only goats, which were not subjected to such kind of torture," he said.

Sharing some more details, Kalyanam said that Gandhiji was particular about punctuality and if somebody came an hour late, the Bapu would say, "You delayed India's Independence by an hour."

Kalyanam also revealed that Gandhiji ate saltless food, not because he was against salt laws, but to encourage his wife, Kasturba Gandhi, to give up salt on a doctor's advice.

"Kasturbaji was an adamant woman. She argued with the doctors as to how one could give up salt in food. Gandhiji then asked Kasturba to do so. Then, she asked Gandhi, 'How can one eat saltless food. Can you do so?' From then, Gandhiji gave up salt in his food."

Also, contrary to popular belief, according to Kalyanam, Gandhiji never uttered "Hey Ram" as his last words.

"There was a big crowd there. I was just a few inches behind him. And someone came and shot Gandhiji. The bullet missed me by a few inches. Somebody in the crowd may have said, 'Haiyo Ram' or 'Aiyo'. I don't know. But according to me, I don't think he said, 'Hey Ram'."

How Kalyanam became a freedom fighter

I was a student then. I was least interested in politics. As school students, we never read newspapers. Then, people used to talk about how Gandhiji was fighting for Independence. I wondered why he was doing so, because we were living such a good life under the British rule. Then one day, one elderly person asked me to leave pamphlets at the doors of houses at night. I didn't read the pamphlets and didn't know what it was all about. On the third day, a policeman caught me doing so. He asked me, 'Do you know what you were doing?' I said, 'I haven't read the pamphlet.' He told me that the pamphlet was urging people to protest the British rule and what I had been doing was an act of treason. They put me in Lahore Jail. That's how I became a freedom fighter.

