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CORRUPTION IN INDIAN POLITICS

Dr. Satyveer Singh[*]
Jyoti[**]

Abstract

Therefore, corruption is an intractable problem; it is like diabetes, which can only be controlled, but not totally eliminated. It may not be possible to root out corruption completely at all levels but it is possible to contain it within tolerable limits. Honest and dedicated persons in public life, control over electoral expenses, could be some of the important prescriptions to combat corruption. Corruption has a corrosive impact on our economy and leads to loss of overseas opportunities. Corruption is a global problem that all countries of the world have to confront: solutions, however, can only be home-grown.

Introduction

Corruption is widespread in India. India is ranked 85 out of 179 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, although its score has improved consistently from 2.7 in 2002 to 3.4 in 2008. Corruption has taken the role of a pervasive aspect of Indian politics and bureaucracy. The economy of India was under socialist-inspired policies for an entire generation from the 1950s until the 1980s. The economy was shackled by extensive regulation, protectionism and public ownership, leading to pervasive corruption and slow growth.

Political parties are perceived to be the most corrupt institutions by Indians, according to 2009 Global Corruption

[*] Post Doctoral Fellow, I.C.S.S.R., New Delhi.
[**] Student, Political Science, C.C.S. University, Meerut.

Barometer. The Barometer, a global public opinion survey released by Transparency International, found that 58 percent Indian respondents identified politicians to be the single most corrupt individuals. Forty-Five percent of the people sampled felt that the government is ineffective in addressing corruption in the country. The survey in India, conducted at the national level between October and November last year, also indicated that the perception of government effectiveness in relation to addressing corruption had improved from 2007. Forty-two percent respondents analyzed that government's actions in the fight against corruption was effective.

Causes and Consequences of Corruption:-

Corruption is a global phenomenon and it is omnipresent. Corruption has progressively increased and is now rampant in our society. Corruption in India is a consequence of the nexus between bureaucracy, politics and criminals. India is now no longer considered a soft state. It has now become a "consideration state" where everything can be had for a consideration.

Corruption in India has wings, not wheels. As the nation grows, the corruption also grows to invent new methods of cheating the government following are some of the causes of corruption.

- Corruption is caused as well as increased because of the change in the system and ethical qualities of men who administer. The old ideals of morality, service and honesty are regarded as anachronistic.

- Tolerance of people towards corruption, complete lack of intense public outcry against corruption and the absence of a strong public forum to oppose corruption allow corruption to reign over people.

- Vast size population coupled with widespread illiteracy and the poor economic infrastructure lead to endemic corruption in public life.
- Emergence of a political elite which believes in interest-oriented rather than nation-oriented programmes and policies.
- Artificial scarcity created by people with malevolent intentions wrecks the fabric of the economy.
- In a highly inflationary economy, low salaries of government officials compel them to resort to corruption. Graduates from Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) with no experience draw a far handsome salary than what government secretaries draw.
- Complex laws and procedures deter common people from seeking help from the government.
- Election time is a time when corruption is at its peak. Big industrialists fund politicians to meet high cost of election and ultimately to seek personal favour. Bribery to politicians buys influence, and bribery by politicians buys votes. In order to get elected, politicians bribe poor, illiterate people.

Consequences of Corruption:-

Corruption is as much a moral as a development issue. It can distort entire decision-making processes on investment projects and other commercial transactions, and the very social and political fabric of societies. The following are some of the consequences of corruption.

Politically, corruption increases injustice and disregard for rule of law. Basic human rights and freedom comes under threat, as key judicial decisions are based on the extent of corrupt bribes given to court officials rather than on the innocence or

guilt of the parties concerned. Police investigations and arrests may be based on political victimisation or personal vendettas rather than on solid legal grounds. Commenting on the socio-political consequences of corruption the Supreme Court of India observed that corruption in a civilized society was a disease like cancer. If not detected in time it was sure to turn the polity malignant leading to "disastrous consequences". The apex court said a socio-political system exposed to such a dreaded communicable disease was likely to crumble under its own weight.

Remedial Measures to Combat Corruption:-

Corruption is a cancer, which every Indian must strive to cure. Many new leaders declare their determination to eradicate corruption but soon they themselves become corrupt and start amassing huge wealth. There are many myths about corruption which have to be exploded if we really want to combat it.

Foolproof laws should be made so that there is no room for discretion for politicians and bureaucrats. The role of the politician should be minimised. Application of the evolved policies should be left in the hands of an independent commission or authority in each area of public interest. The decision of the commission or authority should be challenged only in the courts.

Cooperation of the people has to be obtained for successfully containing corruption. People should have a right to recall the elected representatives if they see them becoming indifferent to the electorate.

Funding of elections is at the core of political corruption. Electoral reforms are crucial in this regard. Several reforms like state funding of election expenses for candidates, strict enforcement of statutory requirements like holding in-party elections, making political parties get their accounts audited

regularly and filing income-tax returns, denying persons with criminal records a chance to contest elections, should be brought in. Responsiveness, accountability and transparency are a must for a clean system. Bureaucracy, the backbone of good governance, should be made more citizen-friendly, accountable, ethical and transparent.

More and more courts should be opened for speedy and inexpensive justice so that cases don't linger in courts for years and justice is delivered on time.

Local bodies, independent of the government, like Lok pals, Lok adalats and vigilance commissions should be formed to provide speedy justice with low expenses.

With the help of the Right to Information Act, citizens should be empowered to ask for information related to public services, etc. and this information should be made available to general public as and when required. Such stringent actions against corrupt officials will certainly have a deterrent impact.

Fighting Corruption:-

Fighting corruption has emerged as a key development issue in India in recent years. More and more policy-makers, businessmen and civil society organizations have begum to confront the issue openly. At the same time, the general level of understanding about corruption has risen markedly. Until recently, it was not uncommon to hear someone discuss anti-corruption strictly in law enforcement terms. By contrast, most people working in the field today acknowledge that public education and prevention and equally important. The field has also come to appreciate how critical the role of civil society is for effective and sustained reform.

A number of factors explain this growing emphasis on fighting corruption. expansion and consolidation of democracy

at the grassroots level has enabled citizens to use the vote and new-found civil liberties to confront corruption, prompting leaders and opposition figures to show a stronger anti-corruption commitment. Internationally since the end of the Cold War, donor governments have focused less on ideological grounds for foreign assistance and concentrated more on trade and development, both of which are undermined by corruption. Countries with high levels of corruption, like India, have found themselves less able to attract investment and aid in a competitive global market. At the same time, business within the country has faced ever stiffer competition with the globalization of trade and capital markets, and has become less willing to tolerate the expense and risks associated with corruption.

Corruption is a universal disease causing harm to the people and government almost everywhere in the world. Corruption is prevailing since the formation of civil society and government judges were paid bribes even in Roman, Babylonian and Hebrew societies. France and England were the bottomless pits of corruption during the 18th & 19th centuries. Since the days of Kautilya the issue of ethics and integrity in government has been a major concern. Kautilya mentions about 40 different forms of corruption and embezzlement prevalent in ancient Indian society. The leaders of Indian during the freedom struggle were upright, honest and men of high ethical and moral ideas, which also continued after getting Independence. Things started changing from late 60s and early 70s onward. However, in countries like India it has assumed the shape of a caner.

A preliminary analysis of the literature shows that corruption in India and elsewhere is recognised as a complex phenomenon, as a consequence of more deep-seated problems of policy distortion, institutional incentives and governance. It thus cannot be addressed by simple legal acts proscribing

corruption. The reason is that, particularly in India, the judiciary, legal enforcement institutions, police and such other legal bodies cannot be relied upon as the rule of law is often fragile, and thus can be turned in their favour by corrupt interest. There is a much better grasp today of the extent to which corruption is a symptom of fundamental institutional weaknesses. Instead of tackling such a symptom with narrow intervention designed to "eliminate' it, increasingly it is understood that the approach ought to address a broad set of fundamental institutional determinants. However, the challenge begun. The implementation of institutional reforms can benefit significantly from the participatory process that is being developed for anti-corruption activities. Equally important, any participatory process, however sophisticated, ought to lead to concrete results beyond enhanced participation and heightened awareness.

It was late Rajiv Gandhi who had once remarked that out of every one rupee sent by Delhi, only 15 paise or 15 percent reached the recipient or the intended destination. This observation was made in 1988, nearly 20 years ago. Since then, things have gone from bad to worse, with all kinds of scams being unearthed. These scams generally involve people's representatives who live on people's money, and consider themselves to be India's saviours. There is no dearth of money in this country, but a dearth of will to deal with the corrupt and to ensure that people's money is spent for the people.

The corruption problems that our nations face today cannot be fought by governments alone. Such problems call for the involvement of the private sector, civil organisations and non-governmental organisations. Until now, such cooperation and coordination have been insufficient. Therefore, all sectors need to join efforts, at the national and international levels, in order to promote:

Table.1 India's ranking at the Corruption Perception Index from 1995 to 2008

Year	Score for India	Rank of India
1995	2.78	34/41
1996	2.63	45/54
1997	2.75	44/54
1998	2.90	66/85
1999	2.90	72/99
2000	2.80	69/90
2001	2.70	71/91
2002	2.70	71/102
2003	2.80	83/133
2004	2.80	90/145
2005	2.90	88/159
2006	3.30	70/163
2007	3.50	72/180
2008	3.40	85/180

- A better understanding of the problem, as well as of the institutions that fight it, and enhanced exchange of information.
- Awareness of the gravity of the phenomenon and a better understanding of the existing legal instruments to fight it.

- Mutual technical assistance, better institutional coordination and a solid and technical assistance, better institutional coordination and a solid and internationally focused approach to the problem.
- The establishment of practical measures for the implementation of member states strategies in the fight against corruption.
- The development of judicial systems that are honest and transparent and that effectively punish corrupt people.
- Leaders from all spheres of life who are honest, professional and upright and who set an example through their behaviour and provide new role models, new behavioural standards and new ways of social interaction.

Policy Interventions:-

In spite on the Right to Information Act (RTI) in place, it is not functional at all in these blocks. People do not even know the existence of the RTI and its implications. The officials are very much reluctant to disclose the official documents and interact with genera masses. In their views (as interviewed with some of the officers, involved in implementation of the policy) it is not possible to disclose all officials documents because the official secrecy (file nothing nature) and moreover, they do not have time to interact with the people because of their work.

The government is responsible for effective and efficient functioning of the policies. If there is transparency in the procedure, and single-window-system including participation of the stakeholders, both in the implementation and decision-making process, then the objectives would be achieved more in degree. Since independence till date, the government has been implementing various programmes with different names but its

outcome is not satisfactory. As rightly stated by our former Primary Minister Rajiv Gandhi, who accepted that only 15 paisa out of one rupee reaches the people, out of the crores of rupees poured into different programmes for the welfare of the people in the rural areas (Ganguly, 2004; D'Souza, 1996: 17-21).

It clearly indicates the failure of administration of public policy. in totality, it is the failure of the democratic governance to deliver basic necessities to its needy and vulnerable sections of the society. In fact, it has failed to make them a part of the development process as our Eleventh Five Year Plan gives emphasis "Towards more inclusive and faster growth". Implementation mechanism of the government apparatus i.e., the line staff those who are in the field starting from the District Collector to the BDO have failed to implement legislatures' designed measures to protect the vulnerable section of the society. All are equally accountable. It is the executives at the top (both political and a-political) who are equally responsible.

Conclusion:-

There is a much better grasp today of the extent to which corruption is a symptom of fundamental institutional weaknesses. Instead of tackling such a symptom with narrow intervention designed to "eliminate" it, it is increasingly understood that the approach ought to address a broad se t of fundamental institutional determinants. However, the challenge of integrating this understanding with participatory process has barely begun. The implementation of institutional reforms can benefit significantly from the participatory process that is being developed for anti-corruption activities. Equally important, any participatory process, however sophisticated, ought to lead to concrete results beyond enhanced participation and heightened awareness. Thus, identifying key institutional reforms in India, and mobilising support for such reforms, needs to be fully integrated into the

participatory process from very early on. Such early convergence is likely to promote a better balance between prevention and enforcement measures in addressing corruption. Until recently, the pendulum was firmly in the "enforcement" corner. The gradual swing towards the middle ground has taken place due to recognition of the limitations to expose legalistic enforcement measures, since the law institutions themselves are currently part of the corruption problem in India.

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