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Corruption in India: An overview

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Abstract

The article defines the very significant concept-corruption. The paper discusses the causes and consequences of corruption, especially in the context of India as a country with considerable regulations. In this paper it has been argued that the lack of transparency, accountability and consistency, and above all the institutional weaknesses provide fertile ground for growth of corruption in India. The paper further discusses some important steps that have been taken by the different regimes in India from time to time for corrupt free administration. It argues that if India wants to develop herself in a modern developed nation; then it needs to end the institutional weakness to curb the nuisance of corruption.

Keywords: India, corruption, weakness, country, administration, power

Introduction

There is no denial to this fact that the Corruption has prevailed in every society be it western or non-western since time immemorial. Nevertheless in the contemporary times or what is referred as modern age corruption in one or the other is always associated with public offices mostly. What does corruption means to a common man? This question has been debated in academia and at political leadership from time to time. The simple and perhaps quite satisfactory answer to this query is that corruption is broadly associated with giving or accepting some kind of reimbursement in any form; be that of money, office or position for a service rendered in an illegal form, or by exceeding one's legal authority^[1]. The former Vice President of USA Joe Biden has defined the corruption as a disease like cancer in society. To quote Biden:

Corruption is a cancer: a cancer that eats away at a citizen's faith in democracy, diminishes the instinct for innovation and creativity; already-tight national budgets, crowding out important national investments. It wastes the talent of entire generations. It scares away investments and jobs^[2].

Furthermore corruption is also a kind of reward promised or reserved, or satisfaction expected for a service that is purified in the course of accomplishment of one's usual administrative or other legal responsibilities. Scholars have also defined it in terms of construed as, "offering, giving, soliciting or acceptance of an inducement or reward which may influence the action of any person" as also "the use of office for private profit". Corruption is manifested in many ways in one's life. Sometimes it may be manifested in a simple form for instance purchase of a tickets by paying an extra amount to the ticket collector or likewise obtaining a license for the creation of an industrial unit or a deal for the production of a building project.

Nevertheless, sometimes, corruption can also take more subtle forms for example the political parties do in the distribution of election tickets to candidates or in the change of political affiliations of the members of the political parties^[3]. The Economic Times defines the corruption as "corruption refers to misusing public power and a deceitful behavior that people in positions of power exhibit for personal gain."

Likewise the World Bank also defines corruption as the abuse of public office for private gain^[4]. Similarly corruption as dealt with by the Council of Europe's Multidisciplinary Group of Ministers is bribery and can be said to constitute the combined effect of monopoly of power plus discretion in decision-making in the absence of accountability. Similarly the section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 defines corruption as:

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Whoever being or expecting to be a public servant, accepts or obtains, or agrees to accept, or attempts to obtain gratification whatever, other than legal remuneration as a motive or a reward or for bearing to do any official act or for showing or for bearing to show, in the exercise of his official functions favour or dis favour to any person with the Central or State Government or Parliament or Legislature of any State or with any public servant as such [5].

Thus the act of 1988 had defined the corruption perhaps in the simplest and concrete terms in India. In the next section I will look at the question what is the status of corruption in India.

Status of corruption in India

There is no denying to this fact that there is pervasive corruption in India across the all states. This corruption both at the state and national level affects the basic rights and services of the common man adversely and hamper the growth and progress of India. Many studies have shown how highly rampant and big scandals and corruption charges in the public sectors in the last few decades. The fact is every new scandal breaks the earlier record every now and then. Scholars and policy makers are of the opinion that there are many major causes of corruption in India. Amongst the major causes of corruption, few vital ones are, greed, conditions, opportunities, and other lures that most of

the time include the political party funds, cash for patronage, fear of losing the government office, and more important the need for extra currency to maintain the high standards of living and many others. Thus there is not a single public work where we will not find the involvement of misuse of public office in India in one or the other way to earn more and more from public exchequers [6].

The Santhanam Committee that was constituted by the Central government to tackle the menace of corruption in its recommendations has identified certain procedural causes of corruption in India. Some important are as: red tape and administrative delay; unnecessary regulations; scope of personal discretion; cumbersome procedures; scarcity of goods and services and lack of transparency. Likewise there are other reasons also like where government officers or technocrats on behalf of the state government maximum time engage private corporations to perform some specific public works and majority times what they do is to collusion with these officials and indulge in most corrupt practices. In the recent times a large number of scams have unfolded in India for instance Bofors, HDW Submarines, defence purchases, and many others to count few [7]. This state of affairs can be gouged by this fact that in terms of corruption Perception Index of Transparency International. See the graph below.

INDIA IN LAST 5 YEARS			
Index Year	Rank	Score	Countries Surveyed
2012	94	36	174
2013	94	36	175
2014	85	38	174
2015	76	38	167
2016	79	40	176
2017	81	40	180
2018	78	41	180
2019	80	41	180

INDIA'S NEIGHBOURHOOD		
COUNTRY	RANK	SCORE
India	80	41
China	80	41
Pakistan	120	32
Bangladesh	146	26
Sri Lanka	93	38
Nepal	113	34
Myanmar	130	29

India Corruption Rank: Note: The Corruption Perceptions Index ranks countries and territories based on how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be. A country or territory's rank indicates its position relative to the other countries and territories in the index. India is at 80th among 180 countries by the Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International in her study in 2019 for details see the above.

Impact of corruption in India

The impact of corruption in any county is obviously negative and same is case with India. Some of the important negative impact can be summarized as under:

1. Corruption breeds a distrust of public institutions. The most important is that it undermines ethical principles by rewarding those who are willing and able to pay bribes, and hence perpetuates inequality. The money that one earns by corruption are used to commit organized crimes across the country.
2. Corruption is a just like a disease of cancer, the way cancer put serious health issues in human beings, the corruption does the same to country's progress. It

adversely affects the country's economic development and achievement of developmental goals. Thus underdevelopment.

3. Corruption by and large promotes inefficiencies in utilisation of the country's resources. Moreover it distorts the markets, compromises the justice, destroys everything in society and of late corruption has become a serious threat to national security over the decades. More than that corruption has added the deprivation of the poor and weaker sections of the Indian society ad economy in general.
4. Corruption also breeds organised crimes in Indian society and sometime these criminals acquire such great power that they are in a position to undermine and destroy the public institutions. Such acts of corrupt people and power holders had dire consequences for Indian democracy and the rule of law in general.
5. Likewise for most of the political parties in India the winning of the elections becomes a sole obsession and objective which leads to the increasing election expenses over the period of time. This often led to a

major cause for political corruption in India that is also responsible for the criminalization of politics in recent times.

6. There is a consensus that among the scholars that corrupt hampers the growth of nation. This could be understood by this fact that according to one estimate if corruption was not there in India, the Public Sector Enterprises would have improved their profit margin by almost 20 percent. This claim was laid by none other than corruption economist (Mauro) when he said; if corruption in India is reduced to the level of the Scandinavian countries, then investment would rise by 12 percent annually and GDP would grow at an additional 1.5 percent. Thus it had adversely affected the India's image and growth in general^[8].

Some anti-corruption efforts undertaken in India

Some important anti-corruption acts or measures that were under take by successive Indian governments over the period of time are as under:

1. Although the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) was created in 1964 but it took more than fifty years that it became an independent statutory body in 2003. This was done by an Act of parliament based on a judgement of the Supreme Court of India. The mandate of the CVC is to oversee the vigilance administration and to advise and assist the executive in matters relating to corruption in India. It also investigates cases of corruption that arise out of complaints or detection by vigilance wings in the various public sector departments. Besides it also recommends punishment wherever required for an act of corruption. However, it is then for the executive to punish the individual/group official if found involvement in any corruption charges.
2. Similarly amongst Indian legislation, The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 has been enacted to consolidate the law relating to the prevention of corruption. Likewise various governmental institutions have been established to deal with corruption both at the state and national levels.
3. The Administrative Vigilance Division in the Ministry of Home Affairs was established in 1965. However, The Special Police Establishment has become a part of a bigger organization, the Central Bureau of Investigation. The Central Vigilance Commission has been set up in the Centre. Similar bodies have been set up in the States also to deal with the corruption. The main idea behind this was to have an external independent and impartial body that will look into the allegations against government officials that are indulged in corrupt practices and thus inspire public confidence in government and public institutions.
4. Similarly there are also a number of special laws regulating customs, excise, taxes, foreign exchange, narcotics, drugs, banking, insurance, trade and commerce and export and import. Some of the existing legislation provides for confiscation of the proceeds of crime. The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence compiles yearly information regarding the number of seizures made by the Customs officials, the total value of the seizures and the nature of commodities seized. Similarly, the Enforcement Directorate is also there to combat the malpractice of corruption across the country.
5. Likewise the Central Bureau of Investigation and State Vigilance Bureaus of various state governments register cases and arrest persons under the Prevention of Corruption Act^[9].

Conclusion

Corruption as discussed hampers the development of a country thus it needs to be tackled with strong actions of the institutions. The fact of the matter is that the Laws and rules against the practice of corruption have to be implemented with strictness. Moreover, if needed, the outdated laws and rules should be amended by the government in order to check the acts of corruption in country. Likewise the vigilance also should be increased in all public spheres so that people who are involved in corruption must think twice before indulging in any corrupt practices. Similarly the election expenses should be strictly curtailed so that there is no criminalization of politics^[10]. Finally, without the co-operation of the common man, the evil of corruption cannot be eradicated. If we as the people of India want our country to become corrupt free in which all citizens will be able to enjoy their rights and a good quality of life, then there is a dire need of fighting corruption. Infact it is the duty and responsibility of both the government and the citizens together to respond to this need so that we can progress and flourish.

Thus we can argue that the main conclusion of this paper is that India as a nation must undertake strict reforms. This can only be done by reducing institutional weaknesses both at the legislative and implementation level. Then India as a developing country can offers the best hope to overcome from corruption. However, we must also remember that corruption will not disappear because of reforms alone. Instead reforms can only bring it under control and minimize its adverse consequences and ill effects. Thus India as a country must insure every honest effort in her implementation policy of the different laws so that country can progress from developing to modern developed one.

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