CORRUPTION: IMPACTS AND MEASURES TO CONTROL

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ABSTRACT

Corruption is not only an enemy of development; it is also an antagonist of democracy. Over the past few decades, rampant corruption has bred contempt for the law. Corruption in India is a consequence of the nexus between bureaucracy, politics, judiciary and criminals. It is not an exaggeration to talk about corruption terms of a crisis or a cancer endangering India’s society, democracy and economy. There has been a drastic increase in transactions at Central, State and Local Governments, which creates opportunities for corruption. Corruption is a cancer, which every Indian must strive to cure. Many new leaders when come into power declare their determination to eradicate corruption but soon they themselves become corrupt and start amassing huge wealth. Thus, the number of ministers with an honest image can be counted on fingers. This paper deals with the impact of Corruption on our society. It includes meaning of Corruption, focuses on agencies of anti-corruption and highlights the anti-corruption measures.

KEYWORDS: Corruption, Anti-Corruption agencies and measures.

INTRODUCTION

Corruption is a common word which has become a topic of discussion in all areas of life, corner of the world and by all people of the globe. It is now recognized to be one of the world's gravest challenges. In any society, there is a difference between what happens above board and what is under the table, of what is accepted and what causes outrage.

WHY CORRUPTION BECOMES COMMON?

Corruption is germinated because of two major factors:

1. Greed for money and position
2. The corrupt nature and mentality acquired by birth
These are the factors operate and inspire to promote and live in corruption. The corruption is the result of a corrupted mind. Things around are so corrupted and it is so easy to get away things which are next impossible to acquire and accomplish. These generally promote corruption.

There are many types of corruption. For most people, bribery probably comes first to mind when they hear the word corruption, but other common types of corruption include nepotism, fraud, and embezzlement.

- **Bribery**: An offer of money or favors to influence a public official.
- **Nepotism**: Favoritism shown by public officials to relatives or close friends.
- **Fraud**: Cheating the government through deceit.
- **Embezzlement**: Stealing money or other government property.

In talking about different types of corruption, an important distinction is between administrative corruption and political corruption.

- **Administrative Corruption**: Corruption that alters the implementation of policies, such as getting a license even if you don’t qualify for it.
- **Political Corruption**: Corruption that influences the formulation of laws, regulations, and policies, such as revoking all licenses, and gaining the sole right to operate the beer or gas monopoly.

**Levels of Corruption**

It is also important to distinguish between grand corruption and petty corruption:

- Grand corruption involves substantial amounts of money and usually high-level officials, while petty corruption involves smaller sums and typically more junior officials.

- With grand corruption highly placed individuals exploit their positions to extract large bribes from national and transnational corporations, who appropriate significant payoffs from contract scams, or who embezzle large sums of money from the public treasury into private bank accounts. It is also when politicians design legislation to work in their favor.

- Grand corruption mostly occurs in large procurement projects such as the building of roads, dams, hospitals, airports, mining, oil/gas concessions, construction projects and in arms and defense contracts, in new weapons technology, aircraft purchase, warships, and artillery pieces. Grand corruption involving public officials is referred to as kleptocracy.

- Petty corruption, on the other hand, is the low level corruption that citizens will face every day in their encounters with corrupt public officials, in the struggle to obtain public services such as health care, education, paying taxes, and obtaining licenses. This type of corruption is referred to as petty because the amount of money required in petty corruption is lower.
However, even though the sums are low in stand-alone cases, petty corruption will often add up to quite a large sum of money. So even in case where there is very little grand corruption with the elite, a large amount of petty corruption in the lower offices of government or outside of government can do just as much harm, if not more.

IMPACT OF CORRUPTION

Globally, there is a general consensus amongst most academics and policy makers that the debilitating effects of corruption permeate through all aspects of public life. Several studies have shown that corruption not only stifles growth, it also perpetuates inequalities, deepens poverty, causes human sufferings, dilutes the fight against terrorism and organised crime, and tarnishes India’s image globally. The impact of corruption is multimode, encompassing: political costs, economic costs, social costs, environmental costs and issues of national security.

(A) POLITICAL COSTS: The political costs of corruption are manifested in weakened public trust in political institutions, reduced political participation, perversion of the electoral process, restricted political choices available to citizens and loss of legitimacy of the democratic institution and democracy itself.

(B) ECONOMIC COSTS: Corruption reduces economic efficiency by misallocation of resources in favour of rent-seeking activities, increasing the cost of public transactions, acting as an additional tax on business thereby reducing foreign direct investment, reducing genuine business competition.

(C) SOCIAL COSTS: The effect of corruption on the social fabric of society is perhaps the most alarming damage of all. It undermines people's trust in the political system, its institutions and leadership. Corruption distorts the value systems and wrongly attaches elevated status to occupations that have rent-seeking opportunities. This results in a disillusioned public, a weak civil society, which attracts unscrupulous leaders to political life. Eventually, there is a risk that demanding and paying bribes could become the norm.

(D) ENVIRONMENTAL COSTS: Environmental degradation is an indirect but serious consequence of corrupt systems. Environmentally devastating projects are given preference in funding, because they are easy targets for siphoning off public money into private pockets.

(E) ISSUES OF NATIONAL SECURITY: Corruption within security agencies can lead to a threat to national security, through distortion of procurement, recruitment of incompetent persons, providing an easy route for smuggling of weapons and terrorist elements into the country and money laundering.

ANTI-CORRUPTION MEASURES

It is not possible in any short treatise to dwell upon all the possible strategies for combating corruption. A holistic analysis would demand a focus on socio-cultural, economic, political, administrative, legal-judicial and even technological aspects of reforms in the government system. So the country has not yet reached the point of no return. A set of measures which can be helpful are given:
Corruption is a multi-dimensional problem having legal, political, economic, psychological, and administrative appearance. There is the need of an effective integrated approach.

There is a quick need to provide Constitutional status to institutions, such as Ombudsman (Jan Lokpal Bill, 2010) at the Centre and State level.13

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) should prevent misuse of discretion and corruption by politicians as well as administrators.

The work load of the CBI has of-late increased being the premier investigation agency in corruption cases. It should be made autonomous and be staffed with competent and honest officers.

Corruption will flourish until the general masses resist it with determination and strength. There is the need to provide and build healthy public opinion against corruption.

The root cause of proliferation of corruption seems to be the complicated procedures of the government offices. These procedures need to be evaluated and simplified. Delays must be prevented and officials made fully responsive to the needs of all people.

The salary structure should be fair, so that employees can fulfil their basic needs without resorting to corrupt practices.

There are several rules and instructions dealing with government servants:

All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1954

Central Civil services (Conduct) Rules, 1955

Railway Services (Conduct) Rules, 1956

In this regard Justice H.R Khanna has observed: “The present condition of rules of conduct or declaration of assets cannot assure rectitude among ministers and other members in the public life. What is needed is a climate of strong public opinion wherein none may dare to deviate from the path of rectitude. The ramparts of a clean and healthy administration are within the hearts of people; laws can only punish occasional lapses.”6 So, effective implementation of Conduct Rules is required.

The fountain head of corruption in India is the election fund. It has to be made more rational. Donations to political parties should be made more transparent. There is a need of quick reforms in the Election system of India.

A system of performance appraisal of public servants and rewards appropriate to their performance may help reduce illegal money transaction. The present system of automatic promotion, annual increments and the like, based on seniority should be scraped to ensure efficiency, discipline, honesty and integrity.
The complicated and confusing laws should be amended. The judicial system must become active to prevent further erosion of national ethos and ethics. The Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh expressed concern over growing incidents of corruption in judiciary and said “judiciary should bring accountability and transparency in its functioning” (on the occasion of inauguration of the Third Conference of Chief Justices and Chief Ministers at Vigyan Bhawan). Chief Justice of India R.C. Lahoti declared the year 2005 as the “Year of Excellence in Judiciary” and said there will be no place for any corrupt or indolent person in the system.7

Rules and legal provisions should be amended to enable immediate and exemplary prosecution and removal of corrupt officials without recourse to any political protection.

Elimination of corruption in public services should address preventive, surveillance and deterrent punishment and deal ruthlessly with the nexus of officials with criminal elements and venal political functionaries.

Adoption of Code of Conduct and Ethics not only for civil servants but also for all public functionaries, media, political parties, professionals, and the corporate sector based on constitutional principles and moral values.

Transparency and accountability in matters of public finance should also be promoted. Specific requirements are identified for the prevention of corruption in particularly vulnerable areas of the public sector, such as the judiciary and public procurement. Those who use public services are entitled to expect a high standard of conduct from their public servants.

Preventing public corruption also requires an effort from the members of society at large. For these reasons, the Convention calls on countries actively to promote the involvement of non-governmental and community-based organisations, and to raise both public awareness of corruption and what can be done to combat it.18

A reason for India’s ineffective anti-corruption strategy is lack of political will. Indeed, political will is the critical ingredient for an effective anti-corruption strategy because the political leaders must demonstrate their commitment by providing: (1) adequate resources for combating corruption (2) comprehensive anti-corruption laws (3) an independent anti-corruption agency (4) punishment for those found guilty of corruption, regardless of their status or position in society.

There is now a vast accumulation of Audit Reports to be submitted over the years both at Centre and State level, and not all the matters reported upon have been discussed in Parliament or in the State Legislatures or in the media. There is a need to properly use Audit Report in all avenues.13

The Civil Society Organisation (voluntary or non-governmental organisations) plays an important role in the welfare and development; and these days in matters such as governance and corruption (Jan Lokpal Bill 2010). There is a need for Constitutional assistance to strengthen Civil Society.15
The issues of black income - a sum of $ 1500 billion (Rs 67, 50,000 crore) Indian money stashed in Swiss bank account alone and also at high places have come to attract considerable attention from civil society at large. Some eminent social activists, including a yoga guru, have started serious campaigns for the eradication of this scourge. The demand for getting back money believed to be stacked in Swiss bank accounts has been getting louder by the day.

CONCLUSION

Corruption is an intractable problem. It is like diabetes, 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 the most important prescriptions to combat corruption. Corruption has a corrosive impact on our economy. It worsens our image in the international market 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.

We need reforms in almost all walks of life. Above all we need a strong political will to curb it, an efficient and responsible judicial system to meet out exemplary punishment on guilty persons. The attitude towards corruption and corrupt people needs to be changed. It should not be tolerated but restricted, and then only we can make an equitable society with a progressive outlook. The time has now come to root it out from its roots.

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