

Crusade against Corruption: The Impact of Anna Hazare Movement

Abstract

Anna Hazare movement showed the whole world that the Mahatma Gandhi's peaceful struggle is still relevant in the time of unrest and violence. Anna Hazare movement demanded the enactment of anti-corruption bill called the "Jan Lokpal Bill." It took two years and four episodes of fast- unto- death protests by Anna for passage of the bill. Beside it the movement had greater impact on public opinion in India. These are the main visible impacts of this movement- Ignited awareness in the common masses, ascertaining the responsibility of public servants, strengthening democracy, Renaissance of Gandhain "Satyagraha", Involvement of youth, strengthening right to information and enriching the Jan Lokpal Bill to combat against corruption. We can trace the meaning of Anna Hazare movement in above mentioned areas.

Keywords: Anna Hazare movement, Impact, Jan Lokpal Bill, Areas of Impact.

Introduction

"Social movements are understood as organised collective efforts working towards achieving change. All social movements have an ideology to identify what is wrong with the present and what needs to be done in the future." (Judge P., 2011)

Can any movement, having a specific purpose and using non-violent strategies, bring about a change in society? Human history has been a witness for some of the best attempts of great leaders across the globe for setting an example in front of those who doubts. What seems almost impossible and unpredictable in the beginning, has been made possible with a predictable bright future. The need is to keep to the track with persistence, faith in change, positive attitude, and leading the mass power in the right direction. Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King Jr. have shown such courage for creating a better social order. These leaders were well aware of the long struggle and possible injustice in the beginning, and knowing this they started what made human race think of the capacities of human beings. Their struggle reminds us of a fictional character in Ernest Hemingway's novella entitled *Old Man and the Sea*, where an old man showed his undefeatable will power against a sea of troubles. What made this character, Santiago, immortal is a line in the book which reads like: "A man can be destroyed, but he can never be defeated (68)." At the end of the novella, it is suggested that victory or success should never be judged of the outcome, but rather on the amount of struggle to achieve something. If the intentions are strong; will power is unchangeable; struggle is full of patience and ways are pure, any such attempt is an impact in itself without any question.

People in India have read and seen much about the strategies of Mahatma Gandhi in achieving freedom from the Britishers. It was not an overnight venture, rather a long struggle of years. But he won the battle for us through his non-violence and truth. Such victory establishes an atmosphere of faith and hope, whereas victories won through violence builds an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. We all need hope and faith for a peaceful present and better future. May be, what Mahatma Gandhi achieved for us in the past, has a distancing effect on the mind of post-modern new generation. But certainly they were all watchful towards each



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and every attempt of Anna Hazare in bringing about a change in our society through his non-violent protest. The youth of India must have felt themselves fortunate enough to witness this great cause to testify themselves, what does struggle really mean, and to see themselves, is non-violence still relevant today for permanent solutions? In this way, the Anna Hazare Movement had a great responsibility for keeping the faith of the youth of India. In many ways it created an awareness and healthy ideology in Indian society.

Anna Hazare, a diehard follower of Gandhian philosophy, took up non-violent stand against growing corruption in India. The seventy-two year old man asked for the enactment of an anti-corruption bill called the "Jan-Lokpal Bill" on April 5, 2011 at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi. His main concern was to bring judiciary and the Prime Minister under the yardstick of Jan-lokpal.

It took two years and four episodes of fast-unto- death protests by Anna for passage of the bill. Finally, Lokpal was enacted on 1st January 2014. The Lokpal policy episode is unique in the sense that first time the protesting masses also suggested policy solutions and forced the government to constitute a joint bill drafting committee comprising equal numbers of representatives from the civil-society and government.

The Impact of Anna Hazare Movement

Samanta Banerjee rightly sums up the spirit of India against Corruption Movement in her article entitled "Anna Hazare, Civil Society and the State" published in 'Economic and Political Weekly', where she says:

The Jan-Lokpal Bill epitomizes the ultimate faith of the ordinary citizens, born out of utter despair, in an omnipotent authority – the Lokpal. But mere legislation cannot bring about reforms, without accompanying mass struggles to get them implemented by the executive agencies and grass roots movements to change social habits. The forces of corruption which are deeply embedded in our society will not give up easily, and are powerful enough to frustrate and resist the provisions of any Lokpal Bill. At the end, the fight against corruption has to be situated in the wider strategy of changing both the economic model of development and the social culture, which carry the seeds of corruption. (Introduction, 12)

The movement certainly has made a remarkable impact on Indian civil society. There have been demonstrations earlier, but this one was different in many respects. The media ascertained the reach of this movement to the common people. A wave of solidarity was seen everywhere in the

country, everyone showed a keen interest in the steps taken and incidents happened during the movement. But we as a nation are now concerned with those impacts, this movement has caused in our country afterwards. Some of the impacts have certain basis to be supported by, whereas some other may be suggestive and open for further discussion. The researcher does not claim to be absolutely correct regarding those hypothetical impacts, but assures to have reached about those hypothetical deductions on the basis of print and social media sources.

The following are some of the visible impacts of Anna Hazare Movement:

Igniting Awareness in The Common Masses

Anna Hazare's non-violent yet aggressive movement created a great spark in the minds of common people of India. There have been protests against corruption before, but this one has achieved a great support from the Indian middle class. Anna's success lies in that his eloquence struck a chord with the rising middle class and common people residing in small towns and villages. Common people have been the victim of corruption for a long period of time. Helpless, they had to bribe the concerned officials to get their work done. Corruption affects their daily lives. Therefore, Hazare's unselfish attempt connected and brought all these people together against the burning question of country. The common slogan like "nothing will ever change," in India was replaced with "I am the change."

Anna's fast in the Ramlila Maidan, brought together not only the middle class groups and civil society organisations, but also a whole lot of ordinary people including the rickshaw pullers, auto rickshaw drivers, vendors, students and youth; "... the Anna campaign may have started as an initiative by a group of middle class activists to pass an effective law on curbing corruption, but as soon as the government started rejecting their proposals, it incurred the wrath of the common people and the protest spread to wider sections of society" (Mohanty, 2011; pp.17).

If we raise the questions as to why were they there, we may easily conclude that having been the victims of a corrupt public service system, they wanted deliverance from it. Earlier they used to think that it will remain same since there was no alternative to the system and they had to live with it. When Anna came to the fore, they thought that it was possible to get rid of this demon of corruption from the political sphere of country as a whole. It is a middle class dream to have a system of corruption - free State and they are willing to galvanise for the cause. The Middle class was not much interested in discussions and debate over the causes. They wanted an immediate cure for corruption without fully examining the malaise.

It was beyond the expectation that this class will come up to join a political movement in such large numbers. This has not happened in the past. It looks as if for the first time India's new, urban middle class has put aside comforts and personal ambition and taken to the streets for a political cause. What made them unite? Why all of a sudden they showed their concern with Anna Movement? Pinto Ambrose tries to answer these questions in his article "Anna Hazare's Movement and India's Middle Class" as:

To gain an insight into that massive support to the Hazare movement from the middle class, one may have to understand the middle class disgust with the ruling class and the governing class and governance in the country. The movement against corruption may have come to life at the end of last year after a string of high-profile corruption scandals. But the awareness had begun earlier. There was a growing disenchantment with the way the governing class was managing the economy since the country opted for the neo-liberal model of development from the 1990s. (Social Action, 340-341)

This middle class have no longer any faith in the promises made by elite class politicians. They believe that these people will never seriously work on the real problematic issues of the country since they themselves are involved in those problems. Working in that direction will expose them and endanger their status. But Anna is one among them who is not at all materialistic in his outlook and is free from the selfish ends. So he won their faith naturally. He collaborated with those who have clean image among the people. This brought common faith in his favour.

The leadership of Anna Hazare is symbolic in this struggle of Indian middle class. It will have far reaching impact on Indian political horizon because people became aware of the power of their united stand against any odd. Knowing the worth of their opinion, they wanted to make a difference and serve the nation. Anna was quite clear in his ideology. He could not tolerate his nation to be shattering in this way in front of him. He sensed his responsibility towards his nation and people, because he believes: "The dream of India as a strong nation will not be realized without self-reliant, self-sufficient villages; this can be achieved only through social commitment and involvement of the common man. (Qtd. In The Rising Indian Middle Class, 11)

Ascertaining the Responsibility of Public Servants

The rising awareness of common people about their rights and the duties of public servants made the government to implement something which will ascertain the roles and responsibility of both the

government officials and politicians. The lokpal was intended to bring the working culture of all these under its scan. That's why, in the beginning, the government was reluctant to implement the Lokpal Bill the way Anna proposed. This shows the unwillingness on the part of the government for bringing about any remedial action for the ossified cancer which was gnawing the national spirit from within.

The Jan Lokpal Bill of Anna Hazare demanded a strong liability of public servants and politicians towards the people. The main features of this bill ascertain that:

1. Constitutional institutions like Supreme Court and Election Commission should completely be independent of government influence. No government officer and political leader should hinder the working of these institutions.
2. Cases against corrupt officers and political leaders should be settled within a minimum span of required time. When found guilty, they should be sentenced to jail.
3. The loss of national revenue caused by the guilty person should be recovered from him.
4. If any government officer fails to provide public service to any common citizen in the given time limit, he should be penalized for the unnecessary delay.
5. People can approach Lokpal for redressal of any complaint in the interest of common goodness. If police is not registering their case, the pension file is detained, bills are put on hold, poor quality of roads are being constructed, people are free to approach the Lokpal for such complaints.
6. The members of the Lokpal should be appointed through a transparent process and highly responsible intellectuals should be the authority to appoint them.

These points in the draft of Jan Lokpal Bill made it mandatory for the government to ascertain the responsibility of each government servant as well as role of politicians for the development of civil good. Now each government office has a public information officer whose duty it is to provide exact information of any question raised by people. In the same vein the accountability of politicians are also demarcated. Recently, each political party has to publically announce the status of legal cases filed against their leaders. These developments show that Anna Hazare Movement has been influential to bring about these changes to a great extent.

In an interview, published by University of Leeds, Anna's reply to one of the questions of interviewer has ample proof that he wants to ascertain public servants to be responsible. Anna says: "the creation of the Lokpal is necessary because even the Chief Minister of a state will be accountable to the

Lokpal. To establish accountability, I started my fight for a Lokpal . . . the Lokpal will create too much transparency. But transparency is the right of the people. People should unite and fight for transparency . . . we must get it. (Anna Hazare: A Corruption Crusader, 08)

Strengthening Democracy

India is the one of the largest democratic country in the whole world. The meaning of democracy resides in the public welfare by government. People are in the centre of a democracy as Anna himself announces that in a democracy people power is bigger than anything, and his movement is bigger than the government and its ministers. People elect their representative to rule, but this does not mean that the rulers can become autocrat and do whatever they like. Their prime concern should to serve their people. So democracy is of the people, by the people and for the people. This concept ensures a healthy civil atmosphere where there is no injustice on the basis of social, cultural, political, linguistic, and racial level.

But this concept of democracy, sometimes, is hampered because of several evils prevailed inside society. Corruption is one such factor which kills the democratic ideal by being aristocratic centered rather. Democracy cannot thrive under the shadow of corruption. Anna Hazare in response to a question related to democracy and corruption says:

Corruption hampers democracy. Corruption hampers the democratic mechanism and it creates threats to democracy. That's why I have been fighting corruption for 35 years: to safeguard the democracy of India. We are still fighting for democracy in India. After 35 years of fighting, we have achieved some success but not complete success. Corruption is an obstacle to democracy. It creates a threat to democracy. (Anna Hazare: A Corruption Crusader, 13)

Anna's Movement, in a way, was about strengthening the image of Indian democracy by fighting against corruption. He has his vision of a strong Indian democratic society which is watchful for the rights of common people. He knows that with corruption any democratic ideal can never be achieved. He questions the will of government that if the government takes pride in being democratic, then why it does not protect the rights of common people. Why does not it bother when common people are being exploited by corrupt public servants? Why does it indirectly work to protect the interests of some powerful people against common good? Why does not it form any stiff law to penalize those found corrupt? What is the meaning of democracy when the common man is suffering the pangs of corruption?

Whose rights and duties are to be ascertained and protected respectively, need to be thought in a democratic nation? These are some of the rhetorical questions, raised during this movement and created a huge tumult in the mind of common man. Anna Hazare and his supporters were on strike to build a corruption free democratic India.

Renaissance of Gandhain "Satyagraha"

India against Corruption movement was significant in one more respect that it brought back the relevance of Gandhian 'Satyagraha' in post-modern India. Many people want immediate solution to the problems they face. They do not have that much patience to wait and hope for a change. Their impatient nature differentiates them from the strategy of Mahatma Gandhi. Very often they resort to violent and aggressive methods. Their anger gets reflected in their action. But people generally forget that anger cannot bring permanent change. It brings only immediate solution, which may likely to alter after some time. In addition to this, it creates an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty. On the other hand, your non-violent strategy with patience for a change works miracle though a bit late. This certainly builds an atmosphere of hope and faith.

There will be threats and danger in the path of truth and just. But those who are true, are fearless as well. Anna Hazare has learned this from Mahatma Gandhi. And he rightly proves his Gandhain stanch during the course of whole movement. There were impediments he had overcome; there was challenge he accepted; there was waiting he did with patience; there was uncertainty but he had his hope; and above all there was corruption but he had full faith to reshape democracy. We can assert that with Anna, Gandhian legacy is alive and well. Whatever tactics Anna has used have clear connotation with Gandhian approach against injustice.

Fasting

Fasting is a tactic that Mahatma Gandhi has used most effectively against the British Rule in India in the first half of twentieth century. Even if one is politically weak, or not in a position to fight back against injustice in other ways, fasting proves to be an effective tool with humble approach. Anna Hazare also went for a hunger strike for many days to bring the attention of ruling government to his request and later his demand for strong Lokpal Bill.

Uniting Common People

Anna hazare was successful in bringing Indian middle class on one platform because like Gandhi, he spoke a simple language; wore simple cloths; showed moral values; and was concerned about countrymen and country. Anna's movement has been able to attract the common masses irrespective of their socio- economic position, because the issue of corruption has affected people at all levels of Indian society.

Non-Violence

Using the power of non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi weakened his enemy. The person, who uses this strategy, can never be accused of wrong accusations. You win half of the battle before your enemy struck you. Anna Hazare has been non-violent throughout the anti-corruption movement. And when government used power and jailed him, his victory could be seen in the mass protest against his arrest.

Truth

Mahatma Gandhi considered truth to be equal to God as he once said: "There isn't God beyond truth". He was of the opinion that truth is more powerful than any weapon of mass destruction. Anna too was concerned to fight for what is true, and to bring that truth in front of all. He was true, that's why he was fearless.

All these and some other virtues were quite same in both of them. The point, here, is that Anna revived all these Gandhian values in the first half of twenty first century, and proved that these are still relevant. They are timeless and can make a difference at any place for permanent solutions.

Involvement of Youth

Anna Hazare knew the power of youth in bringing about any change. India is one of the youngest countries in the world. This young generation is educated and techno-friendly. Given a right direction, the youth of India will add their energy with the experience of their former generation. This amalgamation will bear a great fruit for the progress of our country. Anna proved it in his anti-corruption movement.

Anna Hazare and his moral battle with corruption charged young hearts of India to that extent they left their colleges and schools for weeks to be with him. It is a good sign that new generation is sensitive enough to understand what is right and what is wrong. Their involvement against this non-violent struggle will prepare future leaders who will add their own contribution to the tradition of Mahatma Gandhi.

This youth of India gave a new hope not only to Anna Hazare but to the whole country. The soul of Mahatma Gandhi would certainly be feeling happy seeing the concern of the children of his nation. The future of any nation depends on the young people. They can give a new direction to the ongoing progress and can also change what is problematic. National integrity was at stake and the urban as well as rural youth cannot let their country tumble down in such a way. It was the effect of a great cause which naturally compelled them to come out of their comfort zones. They prepared themselves for this long struggle with Anna Hazare. Anna was awestruck with their involvement as he said: "the youth support is a symbol of hope, they have to take the movement forward. The fact is that the youth of the whole nation

stood with us, is a ray of hope" (The New Indian Express, 01).

The impact of Anna Hazare on the youth of India establishes the hope for their active participation in other activities of national importance. It is seen, when they all express their views using some platform. The Nirbhaya Case shook the national spirit and the recent Dr. Reddy of Hyderabad faced the same abominable fate. These two incidents were backed up by the fiery demonstration of young Indians. Undoubtedly, "the Anti-Corruption Movement inspired young people to understand and engage on social issues while allowing them to increase their self-awareness. This puts an emphasis on stakeholders, including Government, civil society and other organizations that work with young people to create a system for active citizenship and to provide young people with exposure and opportunities" (State of Youth, 27).

Strengthening Right to Information

Right to Information is a potent weapon to fight against corruption, arbitrariness and misuse of power. The Right to Information (RTI) is a vital tool for good governance and development. The Main thrust of RTI law is to change the culture of secrecy, red-tapism and aloofness that has long plagued India's monolithic and opaque bureaucracy. The history of struggle for right to information indicates that, it is the result of efforts made for transparency and disclosure of corruption in the wages system in Devdungri village in the Rajasthan. This effort was started by MKSS (Mazdoor Kissan Shakti Sangthan) to tackle corruption at grass root level. As a result many states pass bill related to right to information and in 2005 government passed a land mark Act named, Right to Information Act, 2005 with the objectives of:

1. Greater Transparency in functioning of public authorities.
2. Improvement in accountability and performance of the Government.
3. Promotion of partnership between citizens and the Government in
4. Decision making process; and
5. Reduction in corruption in the Government departments.

Thus right to information has an immense power to make government accountable and transparent. Anna Hazare, Prashant Bhushan and Arvind Kejriwal together toiled hard to strengthen Right to Information. They knew well that this will certainly create a fear among the corrupted officers and politicians. Prashant Bhushan rhetorically demanded the implementation of a stronger bill without which democracy would continue to be an illusion. The then UPA government was reluctant, but their incessant efforts made the government

surrender and work to increase the reach of right to information. The supreme court of India also stated that the corruption is just like a cancer for Indian democracy. It is the biggest challenge for development. The corruption is a main barrier for the accountability and effectiveness in Indian democratic, political, bureaucratic and social system. Now the time has come to pour the root of corruption by the appropriate acid for eradicate it. For this reference Right to Information Act is powerful weapon. We may fight against corruption by the proper use of Right to Information Act.

Enriching the Jan Lokpal Bill to Combat against Corruption

The Word Lokpal was coined by in relation to grievance redressal mechanism L.M. Singhvi in 1963. The Lokpal Bill was first introduced by Shanti Bhushan in 1968 and was passed in the 4th Lok Sabha in 1969, but before it could be passed in Rajya Sabha, the Lok Sabha was dissolved and the Bill was lapsed. Since then, subsequent versions of this bill have been introduced in 1971, 1977, 1985, 1989, 1996, 1998, 2001, 2005 and in 2008, but none of them were passed. The controversial 2011 Bill was passed in Lok Sabha, but was again turned down in Rajya Ssabha.

The researcher has already discussed the major events of this movement for the implementation of a better Lokpal Bill. Apart from those, what needs to be highlighted here is that what was the demand of team Anna which still remained to be fulfilled? There were lot of discrepancies between the drafts of Anna and that of the government. Anna does not want anyone to behave like as an autocrat; neither the government nor the Lokpal. He wants both to be responsible towards the common masses. And for this a strong Lokpal Bill was required which will ensure that corrupted people should be not be spared from the range of its law and at the time same it should remain in its limits in an honest and just way. Prashant Bhushan in his eloquent voiced expressed his disgust in "The Saga of Lokpal Bill" published in "The Hindu" as:

The government was repeatedly telling us that by proceeding with protests while Parliament was considering the Bill, we were showing contempt for parliamentary democracy. We had responded by pointing out that by overlooking the wishes of the people as expressed in numerous polls, surveys and referendums, all of which showed that more than 80 per cent of the people favoured the Jan Lokpal Bill, the government was showing contempt for the people. The drama in the Rajya Sabha showed that the government was not even

willing to go by the will of Parliament. This gives rise to fundamental questions about the functioning of Indian democracy. Is this form of representative democracy allowing the will of the people to be reflected in policy and law-making, or is it being held hostage to parties and their leaderships to be determined by their own whims or corrupt considerations?

Many people thought that the members of anti-corruption movement are forcing the government to accept the draft prepared by team Anna. But the reality is, it was not so.

The Meaning of Anna Hazare Movement

After a long discussion over the possible and probable impacts of anti-corruption movement of Anna Hazare, now it is time to evaluate the meaning of this movement as a whole. The current study on 'India against Corruption' led by Anna Hazare proves that it is an upsurge relatively unique, distinctive and inimitable in nature. It has not only established deeper connections with the ordinary citizens, irrespective of the socio-economic backgrounds that they represent, but has also invigorated the myriad dynamics of relationships between the State on one hand and the civil and political societies on the other.

George Orwell in his political allegory *Animal Farm* (1945) shows how power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. The beast fable has clear connotation with the politics of Indian subcontinent. The first and foremost aim of Anna Hazare was to eradicate corruption in all its form from the Indian society. His life-long struggle has invoked the morality of a number of people who despite the differences of social status, gender, age, language, and region, united and helped Anna Hazare to voice their anguish. Anna Hazare, in his struggle, became successful or not does not really matter. What matters is that beyond the final result, Anna Hazare had done something which has created a great spark in the hearts of Indians. It is not any simple achievement. Hazare is still waiting that spark to catch fire which may reshape the Indian democracy. His dream was to build an India where the voice of every citizen may matter regarding the public welfare; where common people feel free and confident in getting their work done in any public office without any undue delay; where public servants shall have a sense of duty towards their work and responsibility towards their nation; where both the public and public servants, the politicians and the judiciary are in a harmony which may take national spirit to ever new heights.

When Anna himself was asked about the meaning and impact of his movement, he replied: "The movement created awareness among people and it did make a vast difference. Once people were

made aware they began to speak. Corruption did not vanish but the movement made a huge difference. Corruption did not end but the people became brave. In various places people started coming forward and drove the movement further. So it is necessary to build this attitude among people. People have to realise that they are the rulers of this country" (Anna Hazare: A Corruption Crusader, 16). An old man of a small village has made millions understand the power of public opinion.

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