

Corruption and Black Money in Indian Politics

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Abstract

One never thought a day would come when India and its people would be free. Yet, freedom came. The freedom was from alien subjugation and like a monolith it has never been vibrant since its advent on August, 1947, as the teeming millions of people could not be salvaged from the myriad of misery, hunger, poverty, illiteracy, economic backwardness and deprivation of the means of livelihood.

The by-product of independence is the change in social taboos and customs, generally morals and ethics have been adversely affected and vice and dishonesty have replaced virtue and probity in all spheres of life. We encounter everywhere political, communal, caste, class, creedal and language hostility. Every political party has blamed all other political parties of misusing and abusing power and indulging in cancerous corruption.

The Indian Constitution guarantees fundamental rights to its citizens-civil, political and legal in nature. None of these fundamental rights incorporate economic rights. The social and economic rights are incorporated in the Directive Principles of state policy, which is a unique feature of the Indian Constitution. Rights incorporated in this category cannot be legally enforced. Some Fundamental Duties were also incorporated in the constitution under Article 51 A through the 42nd Amendment in 1976.

It is often argued by some that the Directive Principles of State Policy are mere normal or ethical concepts, but it is a mandate of the Constitution and it is the obligation cast on the state to follow the mandate. The view of Directive Principles cannot be underestimated. It is this Constitution under which elections are held and governments formed. Can the elected representatives refuse to act against its mandate? It is their prime duty to make honest efforts to achieve that goal.

Today, the foundations of the Constitution have been shaken by the folly of the people, the corruption of politicians and the privacy of public money running into several thousand crores of rupees. At this moment, when the nation is standing on the escalator of anarchy and corruption, right minded citizens cannot afford to stand frozen in disgust and dismay.

Keywords: Subjugation, Monolith, Vibrant, Myriad, Indian Constitution, Fundamental Right, Directive Principles, Folly, Corruption.

Introduction

Corruption: A Major Issue in India

Corruption in the public arena is not a new phenomenon, nor unique to India. It existed in ancient times, the middle ages and throughout history. Realistically speaking no country is free of corruption. The causes and types of corruption differ. It became widespread during and after the Second World War.

Corruption has been defined in many ways. The dictionary's definition of Corruption is simple: dishonesty and illegal behaviour by people in positions of authority or power. The World Bank defines corruption as the abuse of public power for private gain. In other words, accountability and abuse of power-are key issues in any discourse on corruption matters.

Corruption, like water, flows from higher level to the lower level. Its main spring is political leadership. The prevailing corruption in all aspects of national life in India is the end result of bad examples set by new democratic rajyas and bad educational and economic policies. Corruption

has now become a way of life and the honest and upright people are looked upon as freaks.

Although, corruption in India has been going on for some time, four factors have made the situation critical-

1. it now pervades the highest echelons of the society at an unprecedented scale.
2. Corruption is no longer considered by many to be morally unacceptable or shameful.
3. Lack of an appropriate institutional set-up which could effectively challenge corrupt practitioners at the Highest level; and
4. Lack of political leadership committed to fight corruption.

Major corruption cases in India during the last two decades involve people in high positions. Almost all alleged perpetrators have remained unpunished or the cases have remained unresolved. The community remains convinced that inadequate investigation, weak prosecution, and political manipulation and interference at all levels and responsible for alleged offenders escaping retribution.

Although corruption and criminal activities are considered synonymous, there exists subtle but very important distinction between these two. Economic and policy corruption distorts the functioning of economy but when the money controls the political machine or influences government policies and activities, it threatens the existence of a civil society.

Eradication of corruption is not easy. It is a social issue as much as a law enforcement issue. A number of countries in recent years have achieved success in addressing corruption issues amongst them are Uganda, Tanzania, Hong Kong, the People's Republic of China, New South Wales and Queensland State governments in Australia. While it is for India to decide which organizational form it should adopt to address its own situation, the experience of these countries would assist in developing an appropriate strategy to fight both corruption and criminalisation of the political system.

The Five mantras of the anti-corruption drive may be as follows:-

1. Monopolies must be reduced and carefully regulated;
2. Official discretion must be clarified.
3. Accountability must be enhanced;
4. The probability of being caught must increase; and
5. Penalties for corruption (both givers and takers) must rise.

It is a tall order, but there is no short cut when corruption has engulfed society as a whole like an uncontrolled bushfire in summer. A government of clean, honest and patriotic people is the first necessity to clean the Augean stables. Only then it can take steps to reform the educational and economic policies and electoral system.

Black Money Boom

Black money has been the curse on India's economy since independence. Forty years of socialist raj led to a tightly controlled economy with personal tax rates of upto 97.5%. Frequently industry

generated black money to pay off politicians for the licences to conduct business.

Since liberalisation in 1991, things have changed dramatically. Licences and permits have been done away with and the maximum tax rate of 33% is quite comparable with other developed and liberalized economies. Less than 15 years after the opening up of the market, the black economy is flourishing again. It is most visible in the property market, but much of it is hidden abroad in the form of gold, real estate and benami instruments. Black money, like gambling, prostitution and corruption, will never go away.

Conversion of black money through politicians is extremely easy and followed by its possessors. Main reasons behind black money generation in Indian politics may be identified as under

Poll Power

It is estimated that candidates of major parties across 542 Lok Sabha constituencies spend over Rs. 10,000 crore, averaging Rs. 5 crore per candidate per constituency. Add the cost of elections to 4,120 assembly constituencies for the total bill; it amounts to Rs. 20,000 crores plus.

Scams and Scandals

Since Bofors in 1987, the country has seen dozen major scams where over Rs. 25,000 crore was carted away. But the conviction rate is abysmal, encouraging the scamsters to indulge in new scams.

Public Projects

More significant cause of generation of black money is leakage of money in public projects nearly 20% of the cost of public projects find its way into the parallel economy. Former Prime Minister She Rajiv Gandhi correctly said in 1985 that barely 15 paise of government spend reaches the public. Even at conservative estimates, over Rs. 50,000 crore leaks out of poverty alleviation schemes.

In almost every decade, the Government of India found reasons to bring undisclosed income and wealth, i.e. black money into the mainstream. Since 1951, many attempts have been made to lay hands on money surreptitiously concealed by the rich people by offering Voluntary Disclosure of Income Schemes (VDIS). Repeated such schemes had made tax evaders optimistic of getting a better deal in the next VDIS. Thus frequent VDIS had not only failed to achieve the purpose of unearthing black money but also had a deleterious effect on the level of compliance among tax paying public.

Aim of the Study

To throw a light on ill effects of corruption and Black money in Indian politics and to discuss steps that must be taken to prevent and Restrict them.

Conclusion

It can be said that the people get the Government they deserve, particularly in democracy. Thus, both the accused and accuser stand indicated in the frial of history. People elected the legislators of their choice and hence they are assessors to whatever good or bad is done by them. They cannot be absolved of any bad conduct of their legislators

and they should be equally blamed for having elected such samples prone to involve in conuption and creating black money. But is there any choice left with the public in the present system? The question remains unanswered.

In this mileau who should the people turn to? Till date we have not been able to establish independent machinery, let alone depoliticise the process of accountability. The moment a demand for accountability is voiced, the Government's stability is rocked. A Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) can be set up only if the ruling party agrees. The same holds true of the Lok Pal (Ombudsman is known as Lok Pal in India). Be that as it may, recall that over the last 38 years, the Lok Pal Bill has been introduced in Parliament as many as eight times, but all failed.

Article 105 of the Indian Constitution should also be suitably amended

Which makes provisions for power, privileges etc. of the Houses of Parliament and of the members and committees there of. Galloping corruption and the lack of integrity at higher levels need consideration without further delay for the health of our democracy. In any democratic country, the Government is always of the people, for the people and by the people as postulated in the hyme from Rigveda:

For growth of agriculture;

For protection of property;

For progress and prosperity;

For support of sustenance;

We appoint thee as our rulers.

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