

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

Combating Political Corruption In India: Issues and Suggestions

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Abstract:

Political corruption in India has its roots in the colonial and feudal order, which is reflected even today in the functioning of the Indian political system. It has maintained a continuum despite the change in political elites and leadership. There is hardly any area of activity that has remained wholly free from the impact of corruption. In fact, political corruption has now been institutionalized and has become a commonly accepted way of life. In India, acceptance of bribes, commissions, under the table payments and gifts by the politicians or the bureaucrats are no longer frowned upon and even subtle ways have been discovered to legitimize them as a part of normal life activities.

Keywords: Corruption, Political, Scandals, India.

1. Introduction

Political corruption corrupts the entire body politic whether individual groups, institutions or political process. In short, such an ethos has been created in the society that corruption has ceased to be regarded as a crime any longer. Corruption in the Indian society has prevailed from time immemorial in one form or the other. The basic inception of corruption started with our opportunistic leaders who have already done greater damage to our nation. People who work on right principles are unrecognized and considered to be foolish in the modern society.

According to TI [Transparency International], 25 % of Indians paid bribe to obtain a service. 68 % believe that governmental efforts to stop the corruption as ineffective. More than 90 % consider police and political parties as the worst corrupt institutions. 90 % of Indians believe that corruption will increase within the next 3 years. "Corruption is a large tax on Indian growth, It delays execution, raises costs and destroys the moral fiber." says Prof. Rama Murthi. One of India's biggest problems is the high-level corruption in the society.

The Corruption Perception Index 2010 issued by Transparency International ranked India 87th of the 178 countries listed. The score is 3.3 which come under highly corrupt countries. The problem is systemic and government alone cannot address it. The Indian public, business and government have equally important roles to play to remove corruption in India. Expecting one sector to hold the bastion while others bring it down will not help India get rid of this disease. Each person can take a few steps to remove corruption. Below are ideas for eradicating corruption in India.

2. Political Corruption: Various Interpretations

A large majority of people believe that political corruption, distinct from administrative one, cannot be so easily observed. But on the dimensions of political corruption in India people are quite familiar with the following issues:

The acquisition (through fraudulent and illegal means) of large areas of farmland by the senior officials and political leaders; the abuse and exploitation of official position to enrich themselves directly or indirectly by using their relations as proxies, grant of favour to members belonging to their caste by overriding the due procedure, and overlooking the claim of others by using favoured officials as instruments, the use of political position to defeat the purpose of judicial process; retention of corrupted but well entrenched political bosses in order to prevent loss of power in relation to a political party; abuse of government support and then enriching themselves; doing business with government in the name of firms owned by them but nominally managed by their wives; use of public parties; misappropriation of public funds or the inability of governments to render accounts for public expenditure.¹

Political corruption is thus, one of the species of wide-range, multi-dimensional nature of corruption but it can however, be distinguished from other types of corruptions. Broadly speaking, political corruption is the misuse of political power for private profits. In political corruption, money enters as a secondary factor in the anatomy of corruption. Here, political influence is pressed into service in order to please the political bosses or earning promotions. Political corruption implies corrupting the political life of a nation at all levels. In its broader aspect, it seeks to politicize all walks of life and in its narrower sense, legitimizes unholy political actions for benefiting vested interests whether personalized or institutional.

3. Nature of Political corruption in India

An analysis of political corruption in India² reveals some theoretical constructs and important characteristics which may be identified as under:

- Political corruption corrupts the entire body politic whether individual groups, institutions or political process.

- Political corruption implies exercising more of pressures and influence than the use of money power.
- Political corruption becomes widespread when unethical political man assumes supremacy in decision-making.
- Political corruption makes easy headway in a land of economic inequalities, social backwardness and moral decline.
- Major manifestations of political corruption are defection, factionalism, and political bargaining.
- Political corruption uproots all political systems but its off-shoots particularly destroy democracies in developing societies.
- Political corruption differs from other types of corruption because it's unethical effect demoralizes the entire fabric of the society doomed in poverty, illiteracy and backwardness.
- Political corruption in India has its roots in the colonial and feudal order, which is reflected even today in the functioning of the Indian political system. It has maintained a continuum despite the change in political elites and leadership.
- Political corruption in India has promoted political patronage as against establishment of social and economic norms. Consequently, the successive elections, parliaments and legislation have failed to checkmate its ugly effects. The problem seems to have become monolithic beyond easy repairs.
- In India, the continued existence of "practically one party rule" for almost four decades, the unconvincing opposition and political apathy of the common man have provided unintended support to the phenomenon of political corruption.

Political corruption has specific norms and goals; owns its structure, and manifests particular pattern of behaviour, which is much different from other types of corruption, such as bureaucratic, corporate, social, legal, etc., though it may look identical with them in some of its aspects and ramifications. The study of political corruption is of utmost value in the Indian context, as other types of corruptions have emanated from it. Politics being the seat of power, the manifestations of corrupt politics are observable at all levels of power hierarchy. Political corruption becomes paramount evil in developing societies because masses in general are illiterate and poverty stricken. Political corruption may not prove so damaging in developed societies, but its offshoots may destroy the very fabric of a nation in a developing society.³

Thus, Political corruption has made easy headway in such societies, which became suddenly democratic from a feudal authoritarian background without imbibing moral, social and economic values, which could have as a bulwark against political deprivations.⁴

4. Political Corruption in India: Its Various Forms

In simple terms, corruption is defined as the behavior of public officials which deviates from accepted norms in order to serve private ends. In more sophisticated terms, corruption is a form of "behavior which deviates from the formal duties of a public role..." However, as interpreted by Joseph La Palombara, there are three critical elements necessary to the concept:

- There must be a separation of [private and public spheres and an understanding that specific rights, duties and responsibilities pertain to the latter.
- Political corruption does not exist apart from political institutions and roles and the specific individuals who occupy them. Unless one element in a transaction is in the public as opposed to the private sphere we cannot have political corruption.
- The public official involved must behave in a way that violates a duty and/or responsibility, and this behavior must serve private (i.e. non-public) ends. These ends may be directly associated with the public official or indirectly with his family, relatives, friends or organizations with which he has dealings. Behaviour may be active or passive. Inaction where the situation may call for action may also be a form of corruption.⁵

4.1. Minoru O'uchi Suggests a Four-Fold Typology of Corruption

- Administrative Malfeasance,
- Political scandal,
- Institutionalised Corruption, and
- Foreign Sponsored Corruption.

All four types of corruption can exist side by side and there is a close inter-relationship between the four types of corruption.⁶ Although it has been argued that corruption is economically wasteful, politically destabilizing, and destructive of governmental capacity⁷, yet there are scholars who hold that corruption can have positive effects too like reducing uncertainty and increasing investment, enabling an economic innovator to introduce his innovations, bringing an element of competition and efficiency into the economic system etc.,⁸ yet its negative effects far outweigh its so-called positive impact.

Thus, as Hilton Root has put it, "corruption is a political problem that has far-reaching economic consequences; opportunities are lost, innovation is deferred, entrepreneurialism and investment are aborted. When citizens perceive that government cannot credibly commit to the implementation of policy designed to increase economic growth government loses support, re-election becomes improbable and questions may even arise concerning the durability of the liberalization process and prevents crucial to the success of the economic reforms."⁹

The entire infra-structure in modern Indian society is built on the edifice of corruption. It has percolated down from top to the bottom. Very often political corruption in India takes place in collusion with the bureaucracy in the shape of huge kickbacks in big national and international deals which go undetected and unpunished for obvious reasons. In India, the connection between corruption and the steady deterioration of the basic administrative system has not been adequately understood and focused upon. This proposition is very well illustrated by a number of incidences of political corruption that attracted public attention in India since Independence. The major such incidences include.¹⁰

5. Major Incidences of Political Corruption in India Since Independence

- Mudgal Affairs (1951).
- Jeep Scandal Case (1955).
- The Mundhra Deal (1957).
- P.S. Kairon Case (1963).
- Bakshi Gulam Mohammed (J&K) (1963-64).
- Nagarwala Mystery (1971).
- Exercise of extra-constitutional authority by spouses, relatives and friends of politicians in powers the most significant being of Sanjay Gandhi during Emergency (1975-76).
- The rise of professional politicians the Antulite Phenomenon (1970s).
- HDW Deal 1981.
- Fairfax Affair (1987).
- Land Allotment case Bangalore (involving R.K. Hegde, Chief Minister of Karnataka) (1989).
- Fodder scandal involving Balram Jakhar a former Speaker of Lok Sabha (1989).
- Airbus a-320 Deal (April 1990).
- Bofors Pay Off (1987-still continuing).
- Bank Securities Scam (1991-92).
- Harshad Mehta's Suit Case Episode (1993).
- JMM Bribery Case against the then Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao (1992 still continuing).
- Cases against Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi and her husband, the former Chief Minister of Bihar (1999-2000 still continuing).
- Tehelka.com Defencegate Scam (2001).
- Taj corridor case (2002-2003).
- Telgi Scandal (2003).
- Nitish Katara Murder case (2004).
- Oil for food programme scam (2005).
- Jessica Lal case (2006).
- Human Trafficking Scandal involving Babubhai Katara.
- Gujarat fake encounter controversy (2007).
- Cash for vote scandal in the federal Parliament (2008).
- CWG [Common Wealth Games] scam (2010).
- Flat Scandal in Mumbai (2010).
- 2G spectrum scandal (2010)
- Uttar Pradesh NRHM scam (2012).
- Karnataka WAKF Board Land scam (2012).
- Indian Coal Allocation scam (2012).
- Indian helicopter bribery scandal (2013).
- Kerala Solar panel scam (2013).
- Odisha Land allotment scam (2013).
- Avian scam of Tamil Nadu (2014).
- Delhi Jal Board scam (2014).
- Indian Railways emergency quota scam (2014). Etc.

The kinds of intrinsic damage that such cases of political corruption have done to the administrative machinery in India have not been appropriately evaluated. Apart from the open acceptance of money or things in kind for favours rendered, political corruption in India has manifested in various ways. Prominent amongst these are:

6. Exercise of Extra Constitutional Authority

Political corruption can take many forms, levels, magnitudes and frequencies. The most important arenas for political corruption are legislature, elections and the administration.¹¹ Apart from the traditionally accepted parameters of political corruption in these arenas,¹² it has at least assumed two new directions in India. The first is the emergence of extra-constitutional centers of power who exercise enormous influence and authority on behalf of the legitimately constituted institutions and authorities. The irony in such situations is that while the conduct of legitimate authority in many cases had ostensibly remained above board, the sons and daughters or close relations of the constitutional authority amassed huge wealth, power and status by resorting to the exercise of undue influence. There are instances of proxy rules by the spouse of the Chief Minister of a State, who has been alleged of corruption in a public deal. Invariably in all cases, there has been a tendency on the part of the constitutional authority to protect their relations and portages, to pretend ignorance of their alleged corrupt deeds and even to resort to their defense in public whenever allegations of this kind had been made in the press or by the opposition.

Since the very first decade of Independence many top political leaders including some chief ministers, central ministers and even the highest office of the prime minister have been indicted by the inquiry commissions on such matters.¹³ Whether it relates to the activities of Surender Singh Kairon, Suresh Ram, Sanjay Gandhi, Kantilal Desai, or Gayatri Devi, or Laloo Prasad Yadav, the issue of those aspiring for and wielding extra-constitutional authority, interfering with the process of governance and taking undue advantage of the positions of the high office held by the parents or spouses has come to the fore recently and in fairly quick

interchange. The role of ambitious wives, husbands and other kinsmen contributing new elements of unsavouriness to the process of administration has come under severe criticism. The practice, however, still persists. The most significant question here is not one that concerns just personalities or individuals but the danger that emanates from the development of a political culture that will be detrimental ultimately to the welfare of the people.¹⁴

7. Raising of Political Funds by Professional Politicians

The other new direction in which political corruption has spread into the body politic in India has been the emergence of a new breed of politicians, who have become synonymous with what in Indian politics has recently been termed as 'the Antulites'. Politics in India has come to acquire the character of a big business, in which the fund raising qualities of a professional politician attract the largest premium. Elections having become an expensive proposition, the emphasis in each party seems to have shifted from honesty to capacity to raise funds through any manner and by any means. In the pre-and post-1975 emergency era, the erstwhile Congress Party was accused of raising a large amount of funds through donations in the shape of advertisements to a party souvenir, the costs of which were highly disproportionate to the amount of advertisement space bought by the big businessmen.¹⁵

Even in normal times, the leaders who are able fund raisers have generally come to the forefront. If a party is elected to office, it is these 'clever' and energetic fund raisers, who are often given, charge of the economic ministries, which issue the largest and most important licenses and permits. It is clear that such fund raising activities consist largely of collecting substantial contribution from proprietors or directors of large commercial or industrial firms. These firms, before parting with the funds, naturally want to make sure that there will be a satisfactory quid pro quo. The net effect of this process, as an ex-civil servant puts it, "can only be to mortgage much of the political system to money-power."¹⁶ Thus, the present procedure of raising election funds can be the biggest single source of corruption.

The fund raising capacity of an individual has reached its perfection in the manner A.R. Antulay, a former chief minister of Maharashtra, sought to establish one trust after another. Eventually he had to resign from the office following an indictment by the High Court to the state. However, he personified, as one commentator has put it, "a form of rule in which arbitrariness is not peripheral but essential". "In the Antulay phenomenon", he points out, "Statecraft is severed from politics, manipulation replaces diplomacy, the arbiter of conflicting interests in society himself becomes a sectional interest opposed to the rest of society," and the state is robbed of its legitimacy as the regulator of civil society.

At the very heart of the Antulay phenomenon lays confusion between the private and public spheres, the frequent merger of the one into the other. He not only sold political favours to his friends and private contacts, but also reduced political to a trade in favours to be dispensed and bought. This took an unconcealed and particularly brazen form in the allotment of cement quotas for which high donations to Antulay's Trusts were the quid pro quo.¹⁷

In this game of exhorting donations, Antulay is not unique in the country, but represents a whole new crop of politicians not necessarily limited to the then ruling Congress (I) but also belonging to other parties as well. The distinction between this breed of new politicians and the older generation of politicians, who were similarly indicted like Pratap Singh Kairon and Biju Patnaik, former chief ministers of Punjab and Orissa, is that they used their power often arbitrarily pruning down norms_ not only to advance public interests, but also, and mainly, to achieve public goals. For the new politicians, power or authority is not, or primarily not, an instrument to subserve public goals. Hence, the blurring of the necessary distinction between the private and the public becomes in their case, easy and natural, almost inevitable.¹⁸

Writing about the corruption in public life with respect to the raising of funds during elections (particularly through souvenir on the eve of the Sixth general election in 1977), Arun Shourie, a well-known commentator of the political scene, has, after quoting original documents, shown that large funds were collected by the professional politicians and that even though Prima facie cases had been established against them for illegally collecting large sums of money, the persons responsible have all been rewarded with high offices and the only person to pay the penalty was the person who investigated and wrote the document specifying the amounts and the account numbers with several banks. In disgust Shourie asks:

When the people have no choice but to reinstate those who defalcated with a thousand millions in the last round will the latter not be emboldened to defalcate with a few thousand crores in the current one? Can intelligence agencies that swear one thing today and its opposite tomorrow, serve even the rulers, to say nothing of their doing any good to the country? Do we not minimize the problem when we look upon the politician as the corrupter of public life? What about the 1,151 enterprisers, which donated the 1128 million? Is the businessman less corrupt? Is the average citizen less?¹⁹

These are indeed very pertinent and formidable questions which seem to defy any answer today.

8. The Kickbacks from Government Purchases: The Bofors Scandal

Perhaps the most celebrated case of political corruption, which has not been finally settled and has assumed international dimensions, has been the alleged kickbacks in the purchase of Bofors 155m FH-778 guns. The Swedish Radio had in 1987 changed that a Commission worth 33 million Swedish Kroners (about Rs. 65 millions) was made to an Indian firm in respect of a deal worth billions of rupees for the supply of the Bofors guns. It was alleged that the Commission was paid in foreign exchange to the persons and friends nearest to the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. But the Government was indicted by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for improprieties in the entire negotiations and the deal. There was such a public outcry against it that it became a major issue in the General Elections of 1989, which led to the defeat of Rajiv Gandhi's Government. The Central Bureau of Investigations is still pursuing the case to unravel the mystery of political kickbacks alleged to have been paid in the deal, but according to latest indications, the issue seems to have been pushed under the carpet even by the then Vajpayee Government (1998).²⁰ The issue is again in the news as Hinduja's of UK are being questioned about their role by the CBI

(December-January 2010-11), and the allegation of corruption against Vajpayee Government by Tehelka.com, known as Defencegate scandal (March 2001).

9. Bribing MPS to Save Government: Accusation against the Prime Minister and Some Cabinet Members

One of the major political falls out of the Bank Securities scam of 1991 has been the accusation of bribe against the Prime Minister himself. In 1993, Harshad Mehta, the main accused in the present securities scam has alleged in a crowded press conference that he had personally handed over a suitcase containing Rs.6.7 million to Prime Minister Narasimha Rao at his official residence at New Delhi's Race Course Road. Later another Rs. 3.3 million was delivered to the Prime Minister's men. Although people were skeptic about Rao's involvement in the Scandal, but the opposition made it an issue for a 'no-confidence motion' against the Government. The hasty no-confidence motion brought out by the opposition parties, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Communist Party (Marxist) (CPM) in the Parliament was ignominiously defeated through clever manipulation of the managers of the Congress Party in power when they bought out a dozen of vote enough to defeat the motion. Even if one believed that Prime Minister Narasimha Rao had not accepted any money and even if one reckoned that the ruling regime was not corrupt, there was no way in which one could deny that the cynical act of buying over a dozen MPs represented corruption of a far greater magnitude than the kind of simple bribery that Harshad Mehta had accused Rao of. When MPs went into vote on the no-confidence motion, at least twelve were not voting on the basis of what they regarded as being the right decision for India. They voted because they have been bought. The success of the commercial transaction insured the defeat of the motion and survival of the Narasimha Rao government. As reported in the press, at least one of the defecting MPs appeared drunk on the floor of the Lok Sabha. The others looked pleased and prosperous. And the Congress said that the result of the motion proved that the people were not willing to believe that the government was corrupt. "Nobody in the Congress seemed to realize just how ironic it was."²¹

Incidentally, former Prime Minister Narasimha Rao is presently facing enquiries and court cases in this incident of buying MPs though bribery to save his government. He resisted trail on the ground that democracy stood in danger of destruction, if techniques adopted to procure votes whatever they may be are subjected to judicial integrity.²² He is now awaiting judgment on the sentence after being convicted by the trial court along with Buta Singh, another Minister, who has been similarly convicted for the charged of bribery.²³ It is indeed paradoxical and abhorring, that in the present coalition government led by the National Democratic Alliance of 18 political parties and other groups (where not only the intra-alliance differences are sometimes acute and irreconcilable, but the opposition parties and groups are ever ready to censor the government and stage a walk out on the slightest pretext), all the MPs in Lok Sabha. Cutting across party lines should unite together as one to express concern at the Supreme Court taking up a PIL to examine whether the constitutional immunity granted to MPs was a blanket one, and kept them beyond the pale of law even in cases where they were accused of taking bribes to vote in a particular way in Parliament. They saw it as an unnecessary interference by the judiciary.²⁴ So much for the political will to fight corruption!

The Harshad Mehta's suitcase episode demonstrates two realities about corruption in India. The first is that it is more widespread than before; and second is, that it hardly matters. There was a time when a minister who accepted money from industrialists was regarded as a bit of crook and treated with a certain disdain by his colleagues. Today, every other minister takes money from businessmen and many will not bother to deny it. Rather justify it on the grounds of rising cost of election expenses and explain that these funds can only be generated from private industry. Since no businessmen will part with money for nothing. There has to be a certain level of quid pro quo.²⁵

10. Formation of Jumbo Council of Ministers

Another aspect of bribing the MPs/MLAs is through the inducement to give the supporting legislators berths in the Council of Ministers or give them lure of public offices to enable a party in minority or a particular political leader to continue in power resulting in the formation of jumbo sized governments. In the last ten years this has become a common feature of practically all governments both at the Centre and in many states having coalition governments. An extreme example is the constitution of the recent Government under the leadership of Chief Minister Rabri Devi in the state of Bihar after the recent Assembly elections (March 2000), wherein almost all the 66 members of the Congress I party, who lent support to Rabri Government in the coalition have been given berths in the Council of Ministers. One could argue that this is strictly a legitimate offshoot of the phenomenon of coalition governments, but in practical terms it amounts to a subtle aspect of political corruptions, for it puts a huge enormous unnecessary burden on public exchequer, and the use of government money for keeping the legislators in one's flock against all norms of public morality and propriety, and further opens more opportunities for corruption by the incumbent ministers. Almost all political parties have been guilty of this practice in the formation of governments, particularly in the last four General Elections (10-13th Lok Sabha), and Assembly Elections during 1995-2000. Over bloated cabinets impair efficient functioning and set a bad example for all levels of bureaucracy. An administration steadily sapped in this manner is bound to collapse.²⁶ State cabinets of 60 and 90 ministers send a clear message to the bureaucracy that politicians are out to loot and not administer. Such politicians, in turn, nurture and promote sycophantic bureaucrats who help them in their loot. A bureaucracy steeped in such parasitic culture is not likely to be able to meet the challenges of modern governance.

11. Money Laundering: The Jain Hawala Case

In February 1996, former Prime Minister Rao and some of his Cabinet Ministers, and about 60 other politicians belonging to different political parties and bureaucrats were implicated in an \$ 18 million Jain Hawala Case (money laundering scandal). It has been alleged that many political leaders including the then Prime Minister Rao, many cabinet colleagues and leaders in opposition like L.K. Advani were guilty of violation of the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) and were receiving money in foreign countries by means of Hawala transactions through some businessmen like N.K. Jain and his brothers. Ro was also accused of his involvement in St. Kitts's case and indicted in a vote buying bribery case involving some members of the Parliament (referred to above). At the same time allegations for taking bribes were made against him in a Delhi court by a British businessman, Pathak.

Although the outcome of all these cases has not produced any conviction (except the vote buying bribery case), but the very fact that even the highest political authority has been dragged into the court of law for alleged incidence of corruption smacks of the all-pervasive prevalence of political corruption from top to the bottom. In early 2000, all the accused politicians and bureaucrats in the Jain Hawala case have been discharged by the Court as there was no sufficient evidence to prosecute them. The Court held that merely some entries in the diaries of the Jains in some code words are not a sufficient evidence to hold them guilty of corruption.

12. Other Forms/Cases of Political Corruption

There have been a number of other financial scams and political scandals which had been reported in the press from time to time during the last few years. (a) Recovery of 3.66 crores of rupees from the residence of former Minister of Communication Mr. Sukh Ram through signing of dubious telecom contract involving also his secretary Mrs. Ghosh, (b) 139 crores Urea Import scam_ due to a fraudulent contract signed in 1995 between National Fertilizer Company with a Turkish Company Karsan (In no country in the world, Rs. 139 crores would be paid in advance to any business firm to get any commodity, yet the officials in India paid that amount without getting an ounce of the urea_ a fittest case of the misuse of office and outright dismissal from service, but no action taken against the guilty); (c) 5.25 crores New Delhi Municipal Committee scam, relating to irregularities in billing collection of electrical charges; (d) Petrol pump allotment case in which former Petroleum Minister Satish Sharma allocated 15 pumps from his discretionary quota; (e) Housing allotment case, involving former Urban Affairs Minister Mrs. Sheila Kaul and P.K. Thungan, (f) Indian Bank case involving Chief Managing Director, who granted loans to dubious persons.

At the states level, the numbers of such cases are too many to be discussed in this brief account. The most important is the Fodder Scandal case and the purchase scam in Health Department of the state of Bihar involving many hundred crores of rupees which brought the down fall of the then Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav who was indicted of involvement in those cases. The other well known cases have been the allegation against the Chief Minister of Assam, Mr. P.K. Mahanta in public security scandal; allegation against MsJaylalitha, a former Chief Minister of Tamilnadu in several corruption cases involving fifteen millions of rupees and 3 lakh dollars for her personal gains: allegation against M. Karunanidhi, Chief Minister of Tamilnadu accused of links with LTTE involved in the assassination of the former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, which ultimately brought down the downfall of Gujral government at the Center in 1996. It is interesting to note than none of the accused persons in all these cases have been convicted. Indeed far from political wilderness, they are all enjoying political power in their own states, and in the case of Jaylalitha, her position (between 1998-99), was of a fulcrum on which the then Vajpayee Government of the Centre rotated, till it was eventually brought down by her in April 1999, when she withdrew support and the then Vajpayee Government fell just by a single vote. It is too well known an instance of how powerful a politician can be even though he/she may be facing a number of cases of corruption in the courts of law. Laloo Prasad Yadav's RJD Party's win in February 2000 Assembly Elections, and he being the *de facto* Chief Minister of Bihar by proxy despite being in the jail on corruption charges, is another example of how political corruption flourishes and get rewarded in this part of the world.²⁷

One of the consequences of the widespread corruption and unaccountability in our political system has been that amongst the other nations of the world, India stands high in the list of the 'most corrupt' nations and virtually at the bottom in the international assessments of human development.²⁸ Recently *Transparency International*, based in Berlin ranked 99 countries according to a corruption perception index in 1999 and India's rank is 73. A recent South Asian Human Development Report produced by the Mahbub-ul-Haq Centre in Islamabad has characterized corruption in South Asia as more widespread and dangerous than in other regions because it occurs at the top, is rarely punished and affects more than 500 million people. The report has also pointed out that corrupt money has 'wings and not wheels' and is smuggled abroad to safe heavens and not ploughed back into the domestic economy. Often corruption leads to promotion and not prison.²⁹

13. Measures to Combat Corruption in India

Is it possible to contain corruption in our society? 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. There are many myths about corruption, which have to be exploded if we really want to combat it. Some of these myths are: Corruption is a way of life and nothing can be done about it. Only people from underdeveloped or developing countries are prone to corruption. We will have to guard against all these crude fallacies while planning measures to fight corruption. There are some specific measures to control increasing corruption viz.

- Foolproof laws should be made so that there is no room for discretion for politicians and bureaucrats. The role of the politician should be minimized. Application of the evolved policies should be left in the hands of independent commission or authority in each area of public interest. Decision of the commission or authority should be challengeable 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.
- The Right to Information Act (RTI) gives one all the required information about the Government, such as what the Government is doing with our tax payments. Under this act, one has the right to ask the Government on any problem which one faces. There is a Public Information Officer (PIO) appointed in every Government department, who is responsible for collecting information wanted by the citizens and providing them with the relevant information on payment of a nominal fee to the PIO. If the PIO refuses to accept the application or if the applicant does not receive the

required information on time then the applicant can make a complaint to the respective information commission, which has the power to impose a penalty up to Rs.25, 000 on the errant PIO.

- 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.
- Another potent check on corruption is Central Vigilance Commission (CVC). It was setup by the Government to advise and guide Central Government agencies in the areas of vigilance. If there are any cases of corruption or any complaints thereof, then that can be reported to the CVC. CVC also shoulders the responsibility of creating more awareness among people regarding the consequences of giving and taking of bribes and corruption.
- More and more courts should be opened for speedy & inexpensive justice so that cases don't linger in courts for years and justice is delivered on time. Establishment of special courts for speedy justice can be a huge positive aspect. Much time should not elapse between the registration of a case and the delivery of judgment.
- Strong and stringent laws need to be enacted which gives no room for the guilty to escape.

14. Conclusion

The reason of the corruption is so high in India is because Indian public adulates personalities on the basis of wealth without questioning the source of obtaining wealth. As people do not suffer any social or legal penalties for acquiring wealth by wrong means, corruption continues to be unabated. The apathy of Indian public has resulted in such a dismal situation. Indians need to change their attitude towards corruption. Eradicating corruption is a battle worth fighting, as each Indian citizen will benefit from it. So let us join hands and collectively fight this battle. This is not an exhaustive list, however does enable us to take a few steps towards removing corruption.

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11. Joseph La Palombora, *Politics within Nations* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.. Prentice Hall, 1974), pp. 408-10.
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13. For example, see the Report of Justice S.R. Das Commission appointed on 13 July 1963 to inquire into certain allegations against Sardar Pratap Singh Kairon, the then Chief minister of Punjab; Report of Shah Commission of Inquiry (Final Report, 6 August 1978), against the emergency excesses during 1975-77; Vaidyalingam Commission of Inquiry Report (6 February 1980), against Kanti Desai, son of the former prime minister, Morarji Desai, and Gaytari Devi, wife of the former prime minister Charan Singh.
14. See editorial, *The Hindu*, 9 February 1980.
15. For details of one such analysis of Souvenir Committee accounts before the 1977 General Elections see, Arun Shourie, "A Crumb for the Historian" in *Indian Express*, New Delhi, 11 April 1982. Also see A.G. Noorani, *Ministers' Misconduct* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1977), p. 263. For DMK's (a regional party in south India) method see *times of India*, New Delhi, 18 October 1972 and *Ibid.*, pp. 339-40 and 355. More recently the name Antulay has become inextricably bound up with the most sophisticated techniques of raising funds for ostensibly charitable, or party purposes, or for promoting more selfish interests.
16. See B.K. Acharya, "root of Corruption: A Problem of Social Climate", *The Statesman*, New Delhi, 12 November 1980.
17. P. Bidwai, "The Rise of the New Politician", *The Times of India*, New Delhi, 19 January 1982.
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20. See *India Today*, 12 October 1998, pp. 20-21.
21. See, Veer Sanghavi, "Who is Afraid of Corruption", *Seminar* (New Delhi), No. 913, January 1994, p. 69.

22. For some interesting examples of political corruption vs. political integrity in India, see “Reflections: Once Upon a Time”, The Hindustan Times, 4 January 1998, p. 13: 1-2.
23. The Times of India, 1 October 2000.
24. See The Times of India, 8 May 2000, p. 11: 5.
25. Ibid.
26. See Bloated Ministries, Editorial, The Hindustan Times, 4 March 2000, p. 13: 1-2.
27. While ostensibly being under detention on alleged charges of corruption, Lallo Prasad Yadav’s party won the 2000 Bihar Assembly Elections making his wife Rabri Devi as Chief Minister and the running of the Government by proxy.
28. See Corruption perception Index: Negative Values, in The Times of India, 10 August 1997, p. 15: 6-7.
29. See The Times of India, Editorial, 9th November 1999.