

India's anti-corruption movements



- Kanika Dass

1. 0 Introduction

These days corruption is the word occurring maximum in the print and electronic media and the mind of the people in India today is constantly preoccupied with no other item as the issue of corruption. There are scams galore today which is happening in every corner of our country so that the country is even nicknamed as “ Scamstan” which means land of scams. Perhaps in India the most chanted word next to Gods name is Corruption. According to Elliot and Meril writes, “ *Corruption is a willful failure to perform a specified duty in order to receive some direct or indirect personal gain*” [1] . Thus in corruption a person willfully neglects his specified duty in order to have undue advantage. In fact to call an act corruption, the following characteristics should be present namely, in corruption the specified duty is neglected, there is a willful negligence of the duty and have a personal gain. The prevention of corruption act which proposed in 1988 defines, “ Corruption means and includes all corrupt activities notified by a body designed by the government from time to time”.

2. 0 Combating corruption

In India a three pronged approach is advocated in combating corruption namely enactment and enforcement of a law against it, mobilization of public opinion against behavior, and the strict vigilance. Accordingly the Indian legal system came up with The Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA) 1988, chapter 9 of our Indian Penal Code (IPC) states the measure for the violation of corruption by the citizen of the country, and it also state that any citizens found in this act is liable under criminal conduct under the judiciary. In

chapter IX A under no. 171-B of the Indian Penal Code, ' Bribery' is defined under offences relating to moral misconduct and criminal activity. Indian judiciary has introduced various commissions to check corruption namely, The Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA), The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC).

The lokpal bill has along chequered history as it was first rooted in 1968 in terms of the recommendation of the administrative reforms commission. The introduction of The Right to Information Act (RTI) has given the right to citizens to force the government to lift its veil of secrecy and ensure a corrupt-free system. In spite of this during Nehru era we had innumerable commissions of inquiry on corruption namely, The Railway Corruption Inquiry Committee under Acharya Kripalani (1953), The Vivian Bose Commission (1962), The Santhanam Committee on Prevention of Corruption (1964), The Wanchoo Committee on Black Money (1974). After these unsuccessful commissions hailed the campaign of Anna Hazare with his team of Santhosh Hedge, the retired Lokayukta of Karnataka, RTI activist Arvind Kejharwal, former Police officer Kiran Bedi and others came forward to mobilize young people to the cause and to gain the massive support to the Hazare movement they invited middle class and the young generation of the country to protest against corruption in the country.[2]

3.0 Anna Hazare's Anti-Corruption Movement

I would be wrong if I say the fight against corruption began with this movement because the awareness had begun earlier but it was more hidden and less intense in action. With the nexus of the state with corporations, the poor losing more and more of their assets and the governing class increasing

their wealth and publicly vulgarizing it, there was a pent up anger among the people of the country which the government underestimated. And this gradually turns into movement and these anti corruption movement had the following context for the movement namely,

1. About 15% of the 548 Lok Sabha and 245 Rajya Sabha MPs face serious criminal charge for murder, rape and extortion.
2. A high court judge of west Bengal faces impeachment by parliament and the chief justice of Sikkim took voluntary retirement. There have been serious charges of corruption against some judges of the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court has voices concern over corruption in the lower levels of Judiciary.
3. An ex-cabinet minister, a sitting MP and a few corporate honchos are in jail facing serious corruption charges for cheating thousands of crores of our money.
4. The commonwealth games which should have been a showcase of excellence to remember, is now remembered for completely the reasons of corruption and this is the symbolic of a rotten governance system in every walk of our life.
5. The members of parliament have been increasing their salaries perks and allowances. People in the country do not believe that our parliamentarians need that sum of money for the services they render; it is the national wealth that they have been engulfing. Parliament has not functioned for several days with parliamentarians collecting their perks and salaries for the work done and meetings not attended.

6. Several chief ministers in state have been involved in corruption of great magnitude. Their land deals, mining operations, oil scandals and involvement in financial and business deals have lowered their status and dignity in the public realm.
7. Elections have become a mockery. Where candidates and parties try to outdo each other during elections by corrupt deals. Promises are made that are never implemented, all kinds of tricks are adopted, and people are divided on various grounds.
8. Posts are auctioned. Even the teachers, police officers and people in the administration have to pay bribes for transfers. Ordinary employees of the state-clerks, peons and the others are caught with huge excess and unaccounted wealth that does not belong to them. It is a robbery of public wealth. Those close to the administration have unaccounted money.[3]

These were few of the contexts of the Anti Corruption Movement led by Anna Hazare. These issues were addressed in the lokpal bill.

3. 1 The Evaluation and the Limitations of Movement

I feel this movement had worked for the instant solutions to the immediate problems, where the changes in any society are slow and gradual. The other major aspect which involved in the movement were the middle class people of the society who had only material cause in their minds of getting things at the cheaper rate by bringing back the black money to the country and during the movement there were many money (profit oriented) factor came into picture. We used the Gandhian symbols of white-cloth caps mixed with new age symbols of candles but there ideology was about market exchanges.

[4]And this movement was not a social justice movement like our Independence movement because any movement should be driven by the masses but this movement is driven by a single person who is transformed as a messiah by a disillusioned people. Corruption by those in power is all about he invites people to fight against.

The method to get rid of that corruption for Hazare is all about a law to be enacted. What a simple solution for a complicated problem! What Anna is determined to do is mobilize the people, dictate a bill to the parliament, and ask them to act. This is authoritarianism because in democracy all voices have to be heard and decisions can be made only through dialogue. This bill needed wide consultation and the team of Anna Hazare alone does not constitute civil society. On the other hand bill needed to bring everyone into accountability because judiciary and the parliamentarians were not under the bill. Take the case of India's caste system where we are not able to eradicate it. The caste system is a socio-religious corruption which is more dangerous than the corruption Anna Hazare engaged to fight against.

Dalits still suffer untold pain and discrimination because of this corruption it is like a cancer and this caste corruption is on the increase manifested in different forms. Why was Anna Hazare silent on caste corruption? We have a social evil of prostitution thriving in the name of religion (Devadasi system), female feticide is a concern. , we had anti-Sikh riots in 1984, Gujarat genocide of 2002, Kandhamal riots of 2008-09, these are forms of corruption that have destroyed and divided our society, and many questioned where Anna was during this situation? Dalit columnist Chandrabhan Prasad says, “ The Anna Hazare phenomenon is leading us to the rejection of representative

democracy and this movement is against the India`s political democracy itself”[5]. Because those involved in the movement want everybody to believe that only politicians are corrupt.

4. 0 Conclusion

The massive participation of youngsters in anti-corruption movement led by team Anna is seen to achieve hidden interests of invisible forces. As the team had good financial support from where did this aid come from to a normal social activist. Anna followed fasting method in the protest which was considered has the warning and treat for the nations by Mahatma Gandhi he also said people should not go on hunger strike after the independence of our country. Being the follower of Gandhi, Anna has disobeyed what Gandhi has asked us to follow. This movement has brought a class of people to the politics in the notion of making a difference. The public opinion is valued in governance but that public opinion cannot be based on the class interests. The common people are affected by the corruption of our country and we have also contributed to it.

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[1] Avtar Singh, “ The problem of corruption and its remedies,” *Journal of Social Action* , no. 61 (December 2011), 373.

[2] Pankaj Deep, “ corruption, transparency and good governance,” *Journal of social action* , no. 59, (December 2009), 385.

[3] Ambrose Pinto, “ Anna Hazare Movement and India`s middle class,” *Journal of social action* , no. 61 (Dec 2011), 337

[4] *Ibid.*, 344

[5] Times of India (*Bangalore Edition*), 19th August, 2011.