

SPWI JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL WELFARE

(A Multi Disciplinary Peer-Review Bi-Quarterly
Social Science Research Journal)

Volume 5 Issue 4, October - December 2022

Editor

Dr. D. Suresh



SOCIETY FOR PUBLIC WELFARE AND INITIATIVES

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SPWI JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL WELFARE
Volume 5 Issue 4, October - December 2022

ISSN 2581-6322



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	<p align="center">SPWI JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL WELFARE (A Multi Disciplinary Peer-Review Bi-Quarterly Social Science Research Journal) Volume : 5 Issue : 4 October-December 2022 An ISO 9001-2015 Certified Journal</p>
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POLITICAL CORRUPTION IN INDIA - AN ANALYSIS



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Abstract: *One of the toughest challenges in the contemporary world is the problem of corruption. Corruption undermines good government, distorts public policy/allocation of resources, harms society, and hurts the poor the most. But Corruption is not a new phenomenon. There existed a Sanskrit word "Utkocha," which means bribery to suggest that corruption was there since the age of Mahabharata. There are different types of corruption Corruption in Government Offices, Corruption in the Private Sector, Corruption in the Judiciary, Corruption in Police, and Corruption in Media etc. But in a democracy like India, the worrying factor is the increasing Corruption in Politics. This paper analysis the different types of political corruption after independence. The information for this paper was compiled from various newspapers and websites.*

Keywords: *Corruption, Political Corruption, Fighting against Corruption*

Introduction

In 2014, India was ranked 85 out of 175 countries according to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. According to a study done by Transparency International (TI) in 2005, the country reported with more than 50% of the people had first-hand experience of paying a bribe or peddling influence to get a job done in a public office. TI estimated that truckers pay annually \$5 billion in bribes, officials often steal state property, and in a particular State in India, more than 80% of the subsidized food aid to the poor was stolen.

After independence, it was almost an open field for political corruption till 1965 when the Government of India thought about activating existing Rules and Regulations

to take punitive action against erred officials and politicians. It was interesting to note that political corruption was handled like petty acts of error of judgment till then. The country did not set up a law-enforcing agency to deal with corruption immediately after independence. As such, we do not have validated data about political corruption till 1965. Till 1977, the country was ruled by a single party and, hence there was very less chance of disclosing political corruption till then. This does not point out the fact that the country was free from political corruption till 1977. Here are a few notable political corruption cases since independence as reported in the media.

1. **Jeep Scam (1948):** Independent India opened its first publicly debated political corruption in the Jeep Scandal of 1948. The deal was to supply 200 Jeeps to the Indian government, and was signed with a company in England. The contract was worth Rs.80 lakhs but only 155 Jeeps were delivered which accounts for a scam of Rs.18 lakhs. Then India's high commissioner to the UK was embroiled in the controversy. But the case was closed in 1955 without any for midable action.
2. **Diamond Mining Scam (1949):** Then Union Industry minister was jailed for three years for taking a bribe of Rs.25,000 from gemstone trader Sachendubhai Baron for renewing his diamond mining lease. This appears to be the first reported political corruption where a politician was convicted for taking a bribe.
3. **Cycle scam (1951):** Another interesting corruption case reported was of Cycle import case, and the turn of events raised the enthusiasm of common persons. Even though it was a clear case of political corruption, it was treated by fixing responsibility on a bureaucrat. The then-Secretary of, the Ministry of Commerce, and Industry was jailed (1951) for accepting a bribe instead of granting a cycle import quota to a company. However, things turned upside down with the revelation of Sirajuddin's diary. After six years of the cycle scam (1956), it was found that a few political leaders of Orissa had taken commissions from Muhammad Sirajuddin, a businessman. Consequently, the news got published and later the then Minister of Mines and Fuel agreed that he had taken Rs.10,000 from a mining owner of Orissa as a commission and had to resign under pressure from Nehru. This can be treated as the first known accepted political corruption even though not punished through a judicial process.
4. **Life Insurance Corporation Scam (1957):** The Mundra LIC Scandal was the first high-profile scandal where in 1957 a highly ambitious businessman Haridas Mundra persuaded government-owned LIC to invest Rs.1.24 crores in the shares of his six troubled companies – Richardson Cruddas, Jessop's & Company, Smith Stanistreet, Osler Lamps, Agnelo Brothers and British India Corporation. The investment decision had by passed the LIC's investment

committee. Later, LIC lost most of the investment. The irregularity was highlighted in 1958 by Feroze Gandhi. Mundra was sentenced to 22 years in prison. The case also compelled the then Finance Minister to resign.

5. **Kairon Scam (1964):** Pratap Singh Kairon became the first Indian chief minister to be accused of abusing his power for his benefit and that of his sons and relatives. He quit a year later and was later exonerated in 1964, saying a father could not be held legally responsible for the actions of his grown-up children.
6. **Kalinga Tubes Scam (1965):** In 1965, Orissa's Chief Minister was forced to resign after it became known that he had favoured his privately owned company, Kalinga Tubes, in awarding a government contract.
7. **Kuo Oil Deal (1976):** The Indian Oil Corporation signed Rs.2.2-crore oil contract with a non-existent firm in Hong Kong and a kick back was allegedly given. The name of a member of parliament was dragged along with a few politicians.
8. **Cement Scam (1981):** In 1981, the Chief Minister of a State was convicted of money extortion from the Mumbai builders in the form of donations to the Indira Gandhi Prasthan trust, one of several trust funds he had established and controlled, in exchange for receiving more cement than the quota allotted to them by the Government.
9. **Westland helicopter Scam (1986):** The then Prime Minister's name was brought up in a helicopter scam where Pawan Hans Corporation bought 21 helicopters from a British company that was shutting down. A series of technical faults were reported later. The helicopters were eventually discarded as junk and later stored at an unused airport in Mumbai.
10. **Bofors Scam (1987):** The highly politically motivated Bofors scam ultimately cost the then Prime Minister to lose popular support when he along with a few business tycoons was accused of taking a bribe of Rs.64 crore in a defence deal to purchase 155 mm Bofors guns from Sweden. The deal allegedly, a midwife by arms dealer Win Chadha, brought Italian businessman Ottavio Quattrocchi into the limelight. It has been speculated that the scale of the scandal was to the tune of Rs.40 crore. On May 31, 2005, the court dismissed the Bofors case allegations against the British business group.
11. **HDW Commissions (1987):** HDW, the German submarine maker, was blacklisted after allegations that commissions worth Rs.20 crore were paid. In 2005, the case was finally closed. The allegation was that the German firm paid over Rs.300 million to middlemen and Indian government officials as a commission to secure the contracts for submarines and torpedoes.
12. **Sugar Import Scam (1994):** The food minister resigned over the import of sugar at a price higher than that of the market, causing a loss of Rs.650 crore to the exchequer.

13. **Urea scam (1995):** Rs.133 crore deal was signed with a fly-by-night Turkish company, which was supposed to deliver two lakh tons of urea to India. As a surprise, the entire sum disappeared from Indian shores to various accounts around the globe. The Turkish firm, in turn, disappeared from Turkey. Not an ounce of urea reached India. Seven months later, relatives of top politicians along with NFL officials were dragged into the case.
14. **Hawala Scam (1996):** The Hawala scam was an \$18 million bribery scandal that surfaced in 1996. It involved payments allegedly received by the country's leading politicians through Hawala brokers. It was probably the first scam that gave the public an idea of the loot of national treasures at the hands of the powerful. The scam revolved around the payments politicians received from hawala brokers, who in turn diverted funds to support drug trafficking and terrorism around the globe. Many prominent politicians were indicted in this case, but no action was taken against them due to a lack of hard evidence.
15. **Fodder Scam (1998):** For over two decades, the officials and politicians of a State colluded to embezzle funds worth Rs.950 crores by fabricating vast herds of fictitious livestock for which fodder, medicines and animal husbandry equipment were acquired. The swindle allegedly involved two chief ministers of a State.
16. **Stamp Paper Scam (2002):** Stamp Paper scam was perhaps the most unusual scam in modern India. A former fruit and vegetable seller duped the nation of crores of rupees by printing fake stamp papers. His counter feiting career began with the fabrication of fake passports after which he ventured into selling fake stamp papers to banks, insurance companies, foreign investors, share broking firms and bulk purchasers. The swindle exceeded Rs. 20,000 crore and covered 12 states. Further, a narco test allegedly revealed the involvement of political heavy weights in the scam. The accused was convicted in 2007 and sentenced to 13 years of rigorous imprisonment and fined Rs. 202 crore.
17. **Scorpene Submarine Scam (2005):** Exposed in 2005, the Scorpene deal scam has gone down in history as one of India's largest bribery corruption scandals, in which Rs.500 crore was alleged to have been paid to government decision-makers by Thales, the makers of the Scorpene submarine. In the scandal, the prime accused was selling secret Navy documents to Thales. In 2005, the Indian government approved the 19,000-crore submarine deal with the French company. The purchase of six Scorpene submarines cost the Indian government a lot more than its actual price.
18. **2G Spectrum Scam (2008):** Telecoms Minister was sacked after a report by India's state auditor which said that the Ministry sold licenses and spectrum below market prices, depriving the government of up to \$39 billion in revenues. The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) said rules

were flouted in spectrum allocation to give benefits to several ineligible in 2007-08. The investigation was carried out under the direct supervision of the Supreme Court. Several telecom companies were under investigation and the matter had attracted international attention due to the alleged involvement of global companies in the bid which attracts the provisions of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. The scam became bigger with new revelations of the involvement of politicians, bureaucrats, corporate personalities, media persons and lobbyists.

19. **CWG Scam (2010):** Allegations of corruption spanned a broad-spectrum including issuing of contracts and purchase of equipment– from tread mills to toilet rolls. The preparation for the sporting extra vaganza consumed a huge sum of about Rs.70,000 crore. Like any other scams in the past, the games scam involved a large network of politicians, bureaucrats and corporates acting in collusion. The chairman of the organizing committee was sent to jail and the Delhi CM faced the heat of adverse remarks.
20. **Adarsh Housing Scam (2010):** Adarsh Housing society scam is a typical example of nexus between politicians and bureaucrats, for a land grab. Politicians, bureaucrats, and military officials were accused of taking over the land meant for building apartments for war widows. Local media reported that apartments worth \$1.8 million were sold for as little as \$1,30,000 each in the apartment block, which faces the Arabian Sea in one of the world's most expensive stretches of real estate in Mumbai. The Chief Minister of the State was sacked. The report indicted four former two former urban development 12 top bureaucrats.
21. **MadhuKoda Scam (2011):** In October 2009, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) charged former Jharkhand CM with money laundering to the tune of over Rs 4,000 crore. CM declared assets in 2005 when he became Chief Minister of Jharkhand worth Rs.12 lakhs in less than four years he established a business empire that reached beyond India, to Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, and Dubai. His assets included hotels, three companies in Mumbai, property in Kolkata, a hotel in Thailand and a coal mine in Liberia.
22. **Illegal Mining Activity (2011):** The Iron ore miners obtained the iron ore mining license in Bellary from the State government in Karnataka in 2004. The matter is still progressing with agencies. According to reports, the Karnataka Government's loss over four years was at the very least, Rs.1 lakh crore.
23. **Idamalayar corruption case (2011):** This is a case of a Minister who got convicted of one-year imprisonment for abusing his position in the award of a contract for the Idomalaya hydroelectric power project. The apex court upheld the prosecution plea that the former minister has entered a criminal conspiracy that caused a loss of over Rs.2 crore to the Kerala State Electricity Board by

awarding contracts for the construction of a power tunnel and surge shaft of the Indomalaya hydroelectricity power project to a contractor. This appears to be the first case of a Minister getting a conviction for abuse of powers without evidence of a money transfer.

24. **Indian Coal Allocation Scam (2012):** This scam relates to the allocation of the nation's coal deposits to PSUs and private companies. The scam was reported in 2012. The basic premise of this scam was that the wrongful allocation of Coal deposits by the Government without resorting to competitive bidding caused a loss of Rs.1.86 lakhs to tax payers' money.
25. **Uttar Pradesh NRHM Scam (2012):** Uttar Pradesh NRHM Scam is an alleged corruption scandal in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, in which top politicians and bureaucrats are alleged to have siphoned off a massive sum estimated at Rs.100 billion from the National Rural Health Mission, a central government program meant to improve health care delivery in rural areas.
26. **Saradha Group Financial Scandal (2013):** Financial scam caused by the collapse of a Ponzischeme run by Saradha Group in West Bengal mostly, a consortium of over 200 private companies that were believed to be running collective investment schemes popularly but incorrectly referred to as "Cheat Funds". The present ruling party is repeatedly accused to be in conspiracy with the Saradha Group and Ministers are allegedly involved.
27. **Vyapam Scam (2013):** A massive admission and recruitment scam involving politicians, senior officials, and businessmen. In November 2013, the Special Task Force (STF) of Madhya Pradesh police made a shocking revelation that Vyapam officials rigged five more recruitment tests for government jobs in the state.
28. **Orissa Mining Scam (2014):** Out of a total of 621 mines in Orissa, the lease for around 200 mines is over. But these mines are still in operation despite the expiry of their lease periods. The Orissa illegal mining scam amounts to Rs. 59,203 crore and illegal iron and manganese ore amounting to Rs. 22.80 crore was extracted illegally from the state for almost a decade, the Shah Commission report has said.

Fighting Against Corruption

Fighting against corruption has emerged as a key development issue in India in recent years. More and more policy makers, businessmen and civil society organizations have begun to confront the issue openly. Who is interested in fighting corruption? Who will take the lead? Will Political classes, Judges, Lawyers, Journalists, Police, or the public take the lead in fighting against corruption? The general level of understanding about corruption has risen markedly due to the emergence of social networking platforms and increased awareness. Most of us acknowledge that public education

and prevention are equally important. The country cannot be imagined to be on the road to growth without the contribution of the private sector which plays a crucial role in generating employment. It is a great shame if the citizens are compelled to pay speed money or grease the palm of influentials while they are actively participating in nation-building. If speed money is an acknowledged custom in our society let us legalize it. If train tickets or passports can be issued under the Tatkal scheme let us bring more services under Tatkal or we can add extra charges for speeding up services. In a democratic country, election funding is one of the causes of increasing corruption. The government needs to take effective steps including measures to fund the election. Remedial action to recover the loss due to corruption was almost a failure as well as rendering justice. It would be difficult to initiate drastic action in a democratic country where citizens' rights have been given the upper hand. Thus, prevention is better than going for remedial action and for which we need to plug loop holes in the administrative machinery. There is a need to increase the use of technology/internet throughout the purchase process even for a small amount to avoid corrupt practices in the procurement process. This is because most cases listed in the major corruption cases are related to procurement. There is a need to legalize speed money as done in the case of various Tatkal schemes which helps in collecting more revenue. Whistle blowing system needs to be encouraged in all public departments and the victims of corruption should be encouraged to speak out. As of now, there is no legal protection to bribe givers. Since they are the victims of corruption, they should be allowed to speak out and need not be treated as conspirators or abettors. Thus, there is a need to reform our legal structure as well to prevent the loss of opportunity for the country and stop siphoning off the taxpayer's money.

Conclusion

Corruption is a symptom of fundamental institutional weaknesses. The implementation of institutional reforms can benefit significantly from the participatory process that is being developed for anti-corruption activities. Only recently, the pendulum was firmly in the "enforcement" corner. The gradual swing toward the middle ground has taken place due to the recognition of the limitations to expose legalistic enforcement measures since the law institutions themselves are currently part of the corruption problem in India. Corruption is an intractable problem in India that can only be controlled, but not eliminated. Corruption has a corrosive impact on our economy and leads to the loss of opportunities. Corruption is a global problem that all countries of the world must confront: solutions, however, can only be home-grown.