

BUREAUCRATIC AND POLITICAL CORRUPTION

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Today, corruption has become the root-cause of danger for the integrity and safety of the nation. It may be seen in the recent encounter with terrorists in the Mumbai where three brave and intelligent police officers were shot dead by the terrorists. Report says that purchasing of Bullet Proof Jackets has the smell of corruption. Indeed it is the peak point of the corruption. Our past also has the long list of big scams, it started with Jeep scam in Nehru regime and now continue with all kinds of corruption in every field of the government. There is hardly left any department or state government which did not indulge in malfunctioning or corruption in the country, the amount kept in the Swiss Bank is giving the full proof of the corruption. Corruption starts at top in the political community and it patronizes the administration. In India there is a deep rooted nexus between the corrupt politicians and the corrupt bureaucrats. Politicians appoint the bureaucrats as per their self interests not for the requirement of administration or developmental activities. We have had many cases in which bureaucrats with well-publicised reputation for corruption were appointed to topmost posts superceding other honest officers. There have also been cases in which politicians and bureaucrats have been charged together in corruption cases.⁽¹⁾ After this, it bears others factors for generating the corruption like lack of transparency and accountability; inadequate people participation; frequent transfers of the civil servants; nepotism and favouritism in the appointments of the top posts especially in the states; low remuneration, facilities and over workload of the officials; absence of e-governance, unawareness of RTI Act; inadequate status of CVC; and malfunctioning of SPSCs.

1.0 Corruption :

Corruption is essentially termed as an "impairment of integrity, virtue or moral principle; depravity, decay, and/or an inducement to wrong by improper or unlawful means, a departure from the original or from what is pure or correct, and/or an agency or influence that corrupts .Corruption poses a serious development challenge. In the political realm, it undermines democracy and good governance by flouting or even subverting formal processes. Corruption in elections and in legislative bodies reduces accountability and distorts representation in policymaking; corruption in the judiciary compromises the rule of law; and corruption in public administration results in the unfair provision of services. More generally, corruption erodes the institutional capacity of government as procedures are disregarded, resources are siphoned off, and public offices are bought and sold. At the same time, corruption undermines the legitimacy of government and such democratic values as trust and tolerance.

Corruption also generates economic distortions in the public sector by diverting public investment into capital projects where bribes and kickbacks are more plentiful. Officials may increase the technical complexity of public sector projects to conceal or pave way for such dealings, thus further distorting investment. Corruption also lowers compliance with construction, environmental, or other regulations, reduces the quality of government services and infrastructure, and increases budgetary pressures on government.

Political and administrative corruption, as the dysfunction of a political system or institution in which government officials, political officials or employees seek illegitimate personal gain through actions such as bribery, extortion, cronyism, nepotism, patronage, graft, and embezzlement. Political corruption is a specific form of rent seeking, where access to politics is organized with limited transparency, limited competition and directed towards promoting narrow interests.

2.0 Factors responsible for having political and administrative corruption :

(1)The biggest tragedy of our times is the failure of our bureaucrats and politicians in power, especially in states, to create trustworthy public institutions. What is ironic is that politicians, who have remained chief ministers in their respective states for a long period, have been either rejecting their own institutions or doubting their credibility.

Take the instance of Punjab. The Badal Government had recently approached the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) for the recruitment of officers to the PCS and allied cadres because it had lost faith in the credibility of the Punjab Public Service Commission (PPSC), an authorized constitutional institution.⁽²⁾

(2) Nepotism in PCS (Provincial Civil Service) nomination is high at this time. The state Government has the power to nominate suitable candidates under various registers for appointment to its premier Civil service. Ruling party in Punjab SAD-BJP has nominated only those PCS officers who are really close to the party or ministers. And Government reduced the eligibility Premier Civil service from 10 years to 8 years among those nominated is OSD to a senior minister and he is otherwise a Naib Tehsildar personal assistants to the Chief Minister.⁽³⁾

(3) It goes with out saying that the quality of personnel recruited to public services reflects the quality, caliber and character of members who selected them. It is not just a matter of deep regret, but one of grave concern, that selections made by some State Public Service Commission, Staff selection Board and other recruitment agencies are suspect. Court has set aside many a tainted selection. Corruption nepotism, favouritism and political interference in the selection of candidates for public employment are on the increase.⁽⁴⁾

(4) Our MPs, who seek vote for doing service to the country, shamelessly accept cash for asking questions in Parliament. A non-descript president of the BJP the national party at that time was caught on camera for accepting money his office. In another case a general secretary of the Congress party made a statement that her party's tickets were bought and sold in the Karnataka elections. Tales of under the tables deals when known can be more disgusting, but are common enough to make corruption the order of the day.⁽⁵⁾

(5) In India millions go to bed on empty stomachs. But its political class seems to wallow in wealth. What else can explain the ostentatious birthday bash of the 11-year-old son of Jharkhand's Rural Development Minister Mr. Enos Ekka on which he reportedly spent over Rs. 75 lakh? The son's birthday in 2006 cost in Rs. 50 lakh. While the no. of chickens and goats served at the recent celebration 'befitting a prince' will provide enough ammunition to his adversaries, the staggering expenses should keep the taxman busy. At the time of contesting elections Mr. Ekka's declared cash position stood at a modest Rs. 72000/-. While Mr. Ekka's home district is afflicted by poverty.⁽⁶⁾

3.0 Remedies :

(1) The PPSC's functioning should be made totally transparent and opened to public scrutiny. Only people of high integrity should be appointed as members of the commission. That is the only way to strengthen the faith of youth in public institutions.

(2) Another important institution the credibility of which is often questioned is the police. Politicians, especially when they are in opposition, often seek a CBI probe in major case of corruption, scams, violence etc in their respective states. They out rightly reject the probe by the state police and other state agencies declaring them as politically motivated.

(3) The country today desperately needs towering leaders with a vision and commitment to respond to the agony of the one billion people. The tragedy is that the country's political parties have virtually subverted the parliamentary democracy to which the founding fathers committed this nation. Each political party, whether national or regional, has become either the exclusive preserve of a family or a group.⁽⁷⁾

(4)The composition of Public Commissions is one area that needs a fresh look. To Quote Dr. Rajender Prasad, President of the Constituent Assembly, The Constitution has placed Public Service Commissions on an independent footing so that they may discharge their duties without being influenced by the executive. One of the things against which we have to guard is that there should be no room as far as it is humanly possible for jobbery, nepotism and favouritism. I think the provisions which we have introduced into our Constitution will be very helpful in this direction.⁽⁸⁾

(5) The political parties have an onerous responsibility to ensure that only candidates which impeccable credentials are given tickets to contest the elections. They must shun those with criminal antecedents. The increasing the problem of criminalization of politics can be tackled at the entry level itself only if all the parties show the door to criminals, history-shelters, hoodlums and gangsters.⁽⁹⁾

(6) Political leaders must live by example and making public spectacles out of a private event is against all norms of public life. Instead of frittering away money in self-gratifying ways, the leaders should mobilize support and resources for the development of their constituencies. In this regard former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri has set an example, during his tenure Kerla was suffering from a serious shortage of rice. The government was trying its best to make up for the shortfall and the difficulty it faced during that period is well known. Rice is the staple diet of the keralities and its shortage caused pain to Shstri ji. He took a vow that he would not allow anyone in Kerla to go hungry for want of rice. This concern of his had its effect in his kitchen. Before issuing any appeal, he told the family, we will not eat rice till the needs of all Kerlalties are fulfilled.⁽¹⁰⁾

(7) The government ought to examine genuine and need-based judicial reforms rather than tinkering with plans that would compromise judicial independence---the touchstone of the constitution. The late Nani A. Palkhiwala, who was a crusader for judicial independence, aptly said, "An independent judiciary is the very heart of a Republic. The foundation of a democracy, the source of its perennial vitality, the condition for its growth, and the hope for its welfare--all lie in an independent judiciary".⁽¹¹⁾

(8) 170th Report on Electoral Reforms to the government has recommended that if charges have been framed (which the possible punishment is two years or more of imprisonment).against a person who is willing to contest election must be disqualify for five years from contesting any election.⁽¹²⁾

Corruption is crossing all limits, therefore, there is a need to take some more concrete steps. Firstly the Ombudsman (Lok Ayukats in all States with specific powers) has to be appointed to check corruption among politicians than we can take other steps like recall system; constitutional status of the CVC; awareness of RTI Act among the people; developing ethics and enriching administrative culture among the civil servants; fixing tenure of the civil servants in their postings; banning candidates with criminal background in the politics; ethical training for both politicians and civil servants; redesigned the procedure of the appointment of the members of SPSCs; introduction of e-governance compulsorily starting from police department and local government; special check on the expenditure of the Lok Sabha, State Assembly and local government elections; auditing funds of political parties; and enhanced autonomy for Election Commission of India.

4.0 References :

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