

# Corruption Free India

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## Prologue

Years 2011 and 2012 have been quite eventful for India. These years will be remembered for some of the largest mass protests in India in recent history, surprisingly not to express anger over a dismal performance of Indian Cricket Team. The reason this time was actually substantial: Indian masses wanted to improve a system which looks awfully corrupt now, thanks to some of the largest scandals in Independent India: Coal Blocks allocation, 2G Spectrum allocation, Commonwealth games etc., and some international reports, one of them by **Transparency International** which placed **India at 94<sup>th</sup> place among 176 countries in Corruption Perceptions Index**, tied with Benin, Colombia, Djibouti, Greece, Moldova, Mongolia, and Senegal: hardly any country we consider equal to us on any parameter other than of course, this dubious distinction of being corrupt.

These agitations served at least one purpose: people started thinking of corruption as a social problem rather than a political one. So while Anna Hazare and his team were busy fighting for a strong Lokpal (the ombudsman) and the Union Government with its team of legal experts was trying to refute the arguments by citing technical and economic implications, we all started discussing corruption over tea at a road-side tea-stall, in office corridors and drawing rooms of our middle class households. This resulted in some fruitful discussions, which enlightened us to the gravity of the situation, the role we all have played in aggravating the problem and the possible solutions.

## Where does the Problem Exist?

While looking at the reasons for corruption, we can identify two levels at which corruption happens:

1. At the administrative, so called white-collar level: which is normally not felt in our day-to-day lives, but affects policy making and is the root cause of the country's economic and administrative problems

2. At clerical or blue-collar level: the everyday incidents of corruption faced by the common man

While we make this distinction, we assume that all the acts of corruption boil down to actions not in accordance with the principles of ideal conduct at some or the other level of governance. Even the private sector, if indulging in corruption, at some level, makes money by colluding with a government functionary.

## The Core of the Problem and How it can be Tackled

Here are some checkpoints where corruption commonly happens and some suggestions to effectively cover those loopholes:

1. **Elections** in India are generally accepted as breeding ground of corruption. A political leader spending enormous amount of money to win an election, generally does so with the hope of making multiples of that while in power. An effective remedy to counter corruption at this early level and to encourage honest contestants, who lack monetary support, can be **state-funding of elections**. Since the state can't finance all candidates, a mechanism can be put in place by either linking the assistance to necessary minimum vote percentage or only extending it to candidates of the national parties.
2. **Indian Tax structure requires reforms that are long overdue** and often advocated by economists, industrialists and administrators alike. Efforts should be made to wipe-out multi-level surcharges levied on different taxes which make the calculation process cumbersome. Also, people are encouraged to evade taxes because they don't see their tax money resulting in any improvement whether it is health, education or basic infrastructure. The government can encourage people to act honestly at the ground level by acting honestly at the top.
3. **Bring the documents related to large deals in PSU companies in public domain:** Put up major details

which don't affect their competitive position on respective websites. Also, the role of the political bosses in decision making in PSUs should be minimized with low discretionary power to ministers / bureaucrats who can influence the terms to favor some parties.

4. **Link the pay of PSU bosses/officials to efficiency and performance of the organization:** This will bring the pay structure at par with private sector. Also, for officials found indulged in corruption, there should be exemplary monetary punishment or imprisonment rather than suspension or enquiries which in most cases serve no purpose.
5. Enforcing **reasonable and contemporary laws** and doing away with outdated or unwanted laws that encourage people to circumvent them. Also, there are certain laws which are too complex for a common man to understand, making him vulnerable to harassment by officials who extort money by enforcing such laws. Goal should be to move towards a system where the role of government in day-to-day lives of people is minimized to the bare essential and laws are simple, comprehensible for a common man.
6. **Free police and investigating agencies from political influence:** Often the investigating officer directly reports to some or the other political boss (i.e. minister), which obstructs fair enquiry and trial. A strong ombudsman who works independently of the government can be an effective alternative to the present system. Judiciary is getting corrupted with judges being implicated in some of the recent cases, leading to erosion of faith in this last resort for the fair treatment. I believe judiciary should be accountable to ombudsman.
7. Supervisors/administrators should be held **responsible for corruption taking place in their department.**
8. **Property market is the hotbed for Black-money.** Strict vigilance has to be there to discourage land and property deals which are far undervalued in documentation.
9. As suggested by the honorable Supreme Court, auction **should be the only way for allocating scarce natural resources** like coal, spectrum etc.
10. Last and perhaps the most important, we as the citizens of this progressive country have to pledge not to pay bribes. This sounds Utopian, but if there is no one to pay bribes, none will be able to get it. It is easy to blame our politicians for the state of the country, but we should not forget that they are part of the society and in a way reflect our collective character.

### Conclusion

Corruption is a social phenomenon rather than a political or administrative one. The society, with its collective conscience can rise to weed out the root of corruption. With these suggestions I have made an attempt to present my perspective on the issue. I believe some of these have the potential to improve, if not transform the picture and help build a **CORRUPTION FREE INDIA.**

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