

Corruption in India: Causes, Consequences, and the Path to Good Governance

Dr. Ashwin Loya

Assistant Professor

Navsamvat Law College, Ujjain, M.P.

Abstract: *Corruption has been one of the most pressing challenges to India's governance, economic development, and social justice. Despite being the world's largest democracy with a robust constitutional framework, corruption permeates almost every sector, ranging from petty bureaucratic delays to large-scale scams. This paper examines the concept of corruption, its historical roots, causes, consequences, and its impact on governance, economy, and society. It further analyzes legal and institutional frameworks established to combat corruption, including the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, the Prevention of Corruption Act, and the role of civil society. Finally, the paper suggests reforms aimed at promoting transparency, accountability, and good governance in India.*

Keywords: Corruption, Governance, Transparency, Accountability, India, Lokpal, Prevention of Corruption Act, Good Governance

I. INTRODUCTION

Corruption has been described by the World Bank as the single greatest obstacle to economic and social development. It undermines democratic institutions, slows economic growth, and erodes trust in government. In India, corruption is deeply entrenched in public life, affecting governance at both micro and macro levels.

From historical references of bribery in Kautilya's Arthashastra to modern-day scams such as the 2G spectrum and Commonwealth Games scandals, corruption continues to plague Indian society. It not only hinders economic development but also deepens inequalities by depriving citizens of basic rights and services.

This research paper explores corruption in India by examining its root causes, impacts, and remedial measures while highlighting the role of law, institutions, and citizen participation in curbing the menace.

1. Understanding Corruption

Definition: Transparency International defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.

Forms of Corruption:

- Petty corruption: Bribes in everyday services like issuing licenses, ration cards, or police verification.
- Grand corruption: High-level corruption involving politicians, corporate houses, and bureaucrats.
- Systemic corruption: Corruption that becomes normalized in governance and administration.

2. Causes of Corruption in India

- Weak institutional framework – Lack of effective monitoring and accountability.
- Red-tapism and bureaucratic delays – Excessive procedures push people toward bribery.
- Political funding – Unregulated money in elections promotes a corrupt nexus between politics and business.
- Low salaries and incentives – Especially in lower bureaucracy.
- Social acceptance – Many people perceive corruption as a “necessary evil” to get work done.
- Lack of transparency – Despite RTI, loopholes remain in ensuring accountability.



3. Consequences of Corruption

- Economic impact: Loss of public money, deterred foreign investments, black money, and parallel economy.
- Social impact: Widening inequality, denial of justice, and reduced trust in public institutions.
- Political impact: Weakening of democratic values, criminalization of politics, and governance deficit.
- Administrative impact: Inefficiency in public service delivery and loss of citizen confidence in bureaucracy.

4. Major Corruption Scandals in India

- 2G Spectrum Scam (2010) – Estimated loss of ₹1.76 lakh crore to the exchequer.
- Commonwealth Games Scam (2010) – Large-scale misappropriation of funds.
- Coal Allocation Scam (2012) – Irregularities in allocation of coal blocks to private companies.
- Vyapam Scam (Madhya Pradesh) – Massive admission and recruitment fraud.

These scams illustrate the magnitude and systemic nature of corruption in India.

5. Legal and Institutional Framework

1. Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (amended in 2018)

Criminalizes bribery by both givers and takers.

2. Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013

Establishes an ombudsman to investigate corruption cases against public officials.

3. Right to Information Act, 2005

Empowers citizens to demand information from public authorities.

4. Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)

Supervises vigilance administration in central government organizations.

5. Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)

Plays a crucial role in exposing scams through audit reports.

6. Role of Civil Society and Media

Media has exposed major scams and holds power to shape public opinion.

Civil society movements like Anna Hazare's anti-corruption movement (2011) highlighted public demand for accountability.

Whistleblowers play a crucial role but often face threats, highlighting the need for stronger protection mechanisms.

7. Path to Good Governance: Recommendations

- Strengthening institutions – Independent and empowered Lokpal, CVC, and CAG.
- Political reforms – Transparency in election funding and mandatory disclosure of assets.
- E-governance – Use of digital platforms to reduce human discretion and middlemen.
- Judicial reforms – Speedy trial of corruption cases through special courts.
- Public participation – Encouraging citizen vigilance through social audits and RTI.
- Whistleblower protection – Enforcing the Whistleblower Protection Act effectively.
- Ethics in education – Introducing value-based education to build integrity in future generations.



II. CONCLUSION

Corruption is not merely a legal or administrative issue but a moral and ethical crisis that undermines the foundations of democracy and development in India. While various laws and institutions have been established, their effectiveness depends on political will, citizen participation, and systemic reforms.

Achieving good governance requires a holistic approach — strengthening institutions, enhancing transparency, reforming politics, and empowering citizens. Only then can India move towards a governance system rooted in integrity, accountability, and justice.

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