



E – GOVERNANCE AS AN ANTI – CORRUPTION TOOL IN INDIA: AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Corruption is considered as a cancer in every society of the globe, but it is the result of society itself. Corruption is the creation of human mind and it can be tackled by positive application of human mind. The effects of corruption demoralize the values of democracy, destroy the ethical standards of administration and derail the socio-economic and political justice. Presently, the concept of e-governance is discussed as a tool of mitigating this menace. E-governance provides opportunities to move forward with high quality, cost effective governance practices as well as creates better relationship among society, politics and administration as a means of information and communication technology for achieving the desired objectives, if implemented with a positive mind set. So, this paper analyzes the dimensions of e-governance and some cases of governmental efforts regarding public service delivery through e-medium for minimizing the corrupt practices.

Key Words: E- Governance, Corruption, Information Communication Technology (ICT), Service Delivery System, Online Services, Accountability, Responsiveness, Transparency.

Introduction

Corruption has become a way of life in the world society today. Every pore of developing countries life is steeped in corruption. Now corruption has assumed alarming propositions and diversified in nature. It has become a corrective tissue for various deals and relationships. Klitgaard and Rose Ackerman appropriately pointed out the meaning of corruption in an equation form which is summarized in the governance process as, Corruption = Monopoly + Discretion - Transparency (Joshua and Hine, 2013: 253). Generally when we think of corruption we consider it in the form of bribe. But bribe is not only the form of corruption, it has multiple forms. It may be classified in the form of character, sources, spheres etc. Character wise classification includes miss appropriative, collusive and extrusive kind of corruption. Source wise categorization of corruption covers the self-willed, system-induced and socially obligated etc. The sphere based corruption pin points to political, administrative, judicial and corporate sector (S. L. Sharma, 2012: 6). Many scholars categorized corruption as per their thought process. Gerald Caiden enumerates the forms of corruption like : treason, subversion, illegal foreign transaction, smuggling; kleptocracy, privatization of public fund, stealing; misappropriation, forgery and embezzlement, misuse of funds, unaudited revenues; abuse and misuse of power, undeserved pardon and remission; deceit and fraud, cheating and swindling; prevention of justice, false evidence, unlawful detention; non – performance of duties, desertion, cronyism; bribery and graft, extortion, illegal levies, kickbacks; tampering with elections, vote rigging; misuse of inside knowledge and confidential information; manipulation of regulations, bias and favoritism in decision making; tax evasion, excessive profiteering; acceptance of improper gifts and entertainment; illegal surveillance, misuse of mails and telecommunications, improper use of electronics and computers etc (Gerald E. Caiden, 2001; 17) . Likewise Alatas classified corruption as autogenic, defensive, extortive, investive, nepotism, supportive and transitive etc. Bhure Lal added collusive, coercive and non conjunctive corruption in this classification (Ashok Kumar Singh; 2007: 181 -182).

In case of causal factors of corruption, the first and foremost cause of corruption is degradation of morality and values of the society, politics, administration, judiciary and other direct and indirect actors of governance. The root cause of this ethical degradation is scarcity of resources as well as goods and services. Functional monopoly over the demand and supply is another cause of corruption. It results to create opportunities for corruption by restricting supply deliberately or through withholding information. This tendency can be occurred in both the sectors public and private. The inherent functional monopolistic nature creates a fertile environment for arbitrary decisions and corrupt practices. Complicated legal procedures have another dimension of flourishing corruption. The complex and long procedure of delivering justice paves the way for searching out the shorter routes. This provides for a safety cushion to search for faster justice through various means available to public. Lack of transparency in administration, inadequate provisions regarding enforcement of law, undue protection of public servants by the fellow employers, lack of strong public opinion against corruption, complicated and cumbersome administrative procedure, existence of influence peddlers, lust of wealth, low salary, archaic law, red-tape, economic scarcity, lack of accountability, discretionary powers of officials, hiding the information, human tendency of selfishness, egoist and greedy, bureau pathology, past practices, centralization of powers, unnecessary hierarchy of administration, habitualness of society etc. are the main causes of corruption either one way or the other.

The Government of India has enacted many Acts and institutional framework to control and check corruption, like Public Servants (Enquiries) Act, 1850 ; Indian Penal Code, 1860 ; Special Police Establishment Act, 1941; Delhi Police Establishment Act, 1946; Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947; Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1952; All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1954; Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1955; Railway Services (Conduct) Rules, 1956; Central



Bureau of Investigation, 1963; Central Vigilance Commission, 1964; State Vigilance Commission, 1964; Lokayukta in States; Divisional Vigilance Board; Anti – Corruption bureaus in states; District Vigilance Officer; Directorate of Public Grievances in Cabinet Secretariat, 1988; The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988; Ethics Committee of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) etc. (R.K.Gupta and Shankar Birdi, 2007 : 33). In recent efforts of controlling corruption, the Second Administrative Reforms Commission suggested that the offences should be classified into four categories like gross prevention of the Constitution and willful violation of the oath of democratic institution office, abuse of authority by favoring someone, obstruction or perversion of justice by unduly influencing law enforcement agencies and prosecution and squandering public money. The Commission again recommended that the section 7 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 needs to be amended by inclusion of collusive bribery as special offence (R.K. Kundu, 2012: 7). So, e-governance can be the means of controlling corruption in the present scenario.

Governments have adopted information communication technology (ICT) in the form of electronic governance primarily for the purpose of increasing transparency and accountability, access to information about government institutions, decisions, laws, regulations, providing easy means of coordination between citizens and government etc (Amitabh Ojha, 2009,;7). Actually e-governed system results to minimal human interaction and purely system driven process. This leads to automation of administrative processes. An immediate impact of this automation results to reduction in paper work or paperless governance. ICT helps government to deliver the services with greater accountability, responsiveness and sensitivity. The quality of services improve because volume of transactions and information can be electronically handled and delivered over a wider area in a least time, low cost, minimum difficulty and greater convenience. E - Governance can reduce the procedural delays caused by hierarchical processes in the organization. It can change the administrative culture, bureaucratic structures and administrative behavior. Ultimately, all the above discussed merits of e-governance can result the minimizing of corruption in governance.

Status of India Regarding Corruption as per Transparency International Surveys

The Transparency International has been doing a great job by conducting the surveys and compiling information relating to corruption across countries. The indices of Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) rank countries according to the perception of corruption in the public sector. So, the year wise rank and score of India and China as per CPI results is being highlighted in below table:

Table 1: Year wise Rank and Score of India and China

S. No	Survey Year	Number of Countries Survey	Score of India	Rank of India	Score of China	Rank of China
1.	1995	41	2.78	35	2.16	40
2.	2000	90	2.8	69	3.1	61
3.	2005	159	2.9	88	3.2	78
4.	2010	178	3.3	87	3.5	78
5.	2011	182	3.1	95	3.6	75
6.	2012	174	36	94	39	80
7.	2013	175	36	94	40	80
8.	2014	174	38	85	36	100
9.	2015	168	38	76	37	83

Source: Transparency International, Corruption Perceptions Index Reports

In 1995, the Transparency International ranked India at 35th place with 2.78 score on a scale from 10 (least corrupt) to 0 (highly corrupt). At that time our competitor China was ranked at 40th out of surveyed 41 countries means China was the second last most corrupt country in the studied countries at that time. In the year 2000, India holds the previous score i.e. 2.8 and ranked 69th position in 90 surveyed countries. In this year of survey, China gained 3.1 score and improved the rank at 61th place. Again in 2005, India consisted the similar score i.e. 2.9 and ranked 88th position in 159 surveyed countries but China scored 3.2 and ranked 78th place. In surveyed year 2010, India secured 3.3 score and maintained 87th rank in 178 countries but China holds the previous rank i.c.78 with 3.5 score. From the surveyed year 2011 to 2013 India and China maintained their rank near by 94 and 80 respectively. In 2014, India improved its rank at 85th with 38 score of 0 to 100 range but China loses its rank to 100 out of 174 countries with 36 score. In 2015, India again improved its rank i.e. 76 with 38 score and China also improved to 83 rank.

E-Governance as an Anti Corruption Tool

The politics is the most emergent factor regarding promotion of corruption. It has abetted corruption by virtue of its linkage with criminals, big contractors, industrial and business class undue interference in administration, irresponsible behaviour towards society, huge election expenses, horse trading at the time of government formation and then pumping money to keep



the government alive. The recent example of corruption exposed in Uttarakhand. The nine rebels of Harish Rawat led Congress government provided a compact disk (C D) of sting operation to Umesh Sharma maintained T.V.Channel. In this sting operation Harish Rawat C.M of Uttarakhand is offering money and lucrative government departments of their choice as horse trading to the rebels for protecting his position of Chief Minister ship (Dainik Bhaskar, March 27, 2016:1). To fight and cure corruption needs an urgent, well focused and honest approach. It has to be dealt with an integrated approach, which can visualize all factors ranging from the very basic factors to the complex ones. So, the ultimate solution lies in awakening the people, empowering the citizens through value-based education, imparting political education, maintaining responsiveness of governance actors, accountability of administration and political actors as well as making the governance process transparent. The Official Secrets Act, 1923 was also the main cause of emerging administrative and political corruption in India. But Right to Information Act, 2005 gives an opportunity to reduce corruption from the ambit of politics and administrative sphere. This Act reflects the spirit and needs of the 21st century but may get hamstrung because of the 20th century culture of secrecy and exclusion in the bureaucracy and mostly self-interested and therefore, rationally ignorant individual stakeholders. Today, the citizens, the stakeholders, the consumers of public services, the beneficiaries of development programmes, the civil society organization, the business and commercial houses- all must get the information they require legitimately from the public authorities, local bodies, and government aided organizations relating to their administration, operations or decisions. This is possible only through the proper implementation of RTI Act because, it empowers citizens, makes administration and government accountable, strengthen democracy, promote good governance, develop authority and curtail discretion etc. (R. K. Kundu & S. S.Chahar, 2011: 383). RTI Act, 2005 makes a provision for self disclosure of information by using the electronic based medium at its own level by the public authorities. For this purpose e – governance is one of the answers to minimize the corrupt practices prevalent in the politics and administration. E – Governance seeks to realize processes and structures for harnessing the potentialities of information and communication technologies (ICT) at various levels of government. It has the commitment to utilize appropriate technologies for enhancing governmental relationship in order to advance democratic expression, human dignity & autonomy and efficient delivery of services.

Dimensions of E-Governance

E-government has given rise to phenomena that have become features of a redefined public sector environment. These include the emergence of virtual communities and also of more traditional institutions directly tied to e-government. E-government has had a significant impact on public administration, changing the environment in which the public sector operates, adding new concepts and methods to its operations and changing the relative weight and relationship among established elements of public administration. Perhaps the single most powerful concept inherent in E-government is client-centered service delivery. An integral part of the citizen-centered model is self-service, in which the client assumes many of the administrative tasks performed by the service provider. In the context of on-line services, these tasks can be performed on a round-the-clock basis. Taken together, these two elements are major sources of cost saving (David Brown, 2005:247). So, the below discussed figure is highlighting some dimension of e-governance practices facilitated in India.





This figure highlights the scope or dimensions of e – governance process. Mainly the idea of corruption emerges in the delivering of face to face services. This lead to the involvement of middlemen in the process of service providing. The middleman plays an important role in promotion of corruption. If government provides the facilities by involving ICT in service delivery process which is frequently used by the common man, then the menace of corruption can be controlled or minimized.

A Comparative Status of India and China Regarding E-Governance Process

The e – governance readiness index covers mainly three indicators like online service component, telecom infrastructure component and human capital component for preparing e – governance survey reports. Table-2 points out that China is doing better in comparison to India regarding e – governance process. India is losing its position since 2003 to 2014 year to year but China is performing better as per the e – governance indicators.

Table 2: E - Governance Status of India & China

S. No	Survey Year	Number of countries Surveyed	Score of India	Rank of India	Score of China	Rank of China
1.	2003	173	0.373	87	0.416	74
2.	2004	178	0.3879	86	0.4356	67
3.	2005	179	0.4001	87	0.5078	57
4.	2008	182	0.3814	113	0.5017	65
5.	2010	183	0.6567	119	0.4700	72
6.	2012	190	0.3829	125	0.5359	78
7.	2014	193	0.3834	118	0.5450	70

Source: United Nations E- Government Survey Reports

Online Public Service Delivery in India for Minimizing Corruption: Some Cases

Online delivery of public services can reduce the corruption because this removes the middleman involvement in delivery process. There are some examples which points out positive indications in this regard. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched a common e –platform for National Agricultural Market (NAM). Eventually, NAM aims to link all agriculture markets in all the states, linking farmers directly with buyer through this digital trading platform. In the first phase, it connects 21 markets in Gujrat, Telangana, Jharkhand, Madhay Pradesh, Rajsthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. This digital platform enables the farmers to sell their produce at a better rate anywhere in the country. In the next three phases, the government is also working towards integrating all 585 wholesale mandis of the country including 54 from Haryana by 2018. This platform provides the trade opportunities in 25 crops but experts say due to variation in quality and standards, not even 10% of commodities can be covered under NAM (The Tribune, April 15, 2016: 1-2). Through this process the middleman (adhathi) can be removed from the producer and purchaser transactions. The farmer can get the fare price from his product.

University Grants Commission had written to all the Universities in December, 2015 informing them that fellowships and scholarships have been brought under the direct benefit transfer and public finance management system. This mode of disbursement of payments have been started from April 1, 2016 (The Tribune, February 12, 2016: 12). The Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) pointed out that e – commerce is one such major area of vulnerability regarding new emerging challenges for customs department. This area provides an unparalleled platform for sellers of both genuine and counterfeit products. So, CBEC is looking at the possibility of introducing a voluntary code of practice for e – retailers. The easy concealment of identity encourages sale of counterfeit products on the e – commerce platform. This process can curb the illicit trade practices. Ujjain has organized Singhasth Mahakumbh commenced from April 22, 2016. The use of geographic information system (GIS) in this Mahakumbh makes the arrangement cashless and paperless. The banking facilities have been provided at the parking place of vehicle by issuing Singhasth debit card. Availability of parking has been displayed digitally (Dainik Bhaskar, March 15, 2016:11).

The Haryana transport department has started the web-based online ticket booking for ordinary buses though its website www.hartrans.gov.in. One can book tickets 10 days in advance for buses playing on various routes. The passenger will get the information of ticket booking, bus number, seat number, and destination of journey and the name of the passenger through mobile message. Debit and credit cards can be used for this ticket booking facility (Dainik Bhaskar Rohtak, March 2, 2016:4). The departments of Health and Sports, Haryana have prepared software for maintaining the computerized transfer policy so that the employees of concerned departments need not visit to the political person and administrative officer for their transfer purposes. The service record of every employee is available in the software. Three stations of employee’s choice would be entered and they would be transferred only to the station of their choice (The Tribune, February 12, 2016:3).



Haryana Vidyut Prasharan Nigam (HVPN) has started online application for new electricity connection related matters, handling the grievances of old connection holders and file movement status through the departmental website. This effort will manage the check on the middleman involvement in the departmental functioning as well as reduce the corrupt practices (Dainik Bhaskar, March.7, 2016:7).

Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) is laying the network of fiber cables in Haryana villages under the umbrella of Digital India Programme for providing e – court facilities to the villagers. Through this facility one can give his/her evidence for the court purposes as well as can get the information relating to court cases of India (Amar Ujala, March 21, 2016:2). In the first phase of this project total 493 courts and 347 jails have been facilitated with video conferencing and in the second phase this facility would be provided to 2500 courts and 800 jails (Dainik Bhaskar, April 29, 2016:1). In this process threat less and corrupt evidences can be ensured for delivering the fair and speedy justice to the aggrieved persons. The police department of Rohtak district has launched a website as www.jsticeforrohtak.in for uploading of the crime related videos, photos and there is no need to write the name and address of the uploaded material. Government of Haryana has also started the e – stamping scheme. In the first phase of this scheme it is decided to make mandatory for Gurgaon, Faridabad, Sonapat and Panchkula from May 1, 2016. Any citizen can generate a stamp paper online through the e-stamping system, which is available on egrashry.nic.in. After successful payment through Payment Aggregator Services, the depositors could generate online e-stamp papers immediately and seek the date of registration from revenue authority by using the Haryana Registration Information System (HARIS) portal. During the process one need not to go for any office for purchasing the stamp paper as well as to take help of any vender and bank also. There is no need to come from the different corners of the country for property registration purposes as well as the bank additional charges can be saved by using the e – stamping facility (Amar Ujala Rohtak March 20, 2016:1&8). So, all these examples of e - services can be helpful in tackling the corruption if people can be literate and awaked about the facilities of e – governance and e – services.

Conclusion

Corruption occurs primarily from governance imperfections that generate lack of accountability in the public sector organizations. With the technological developments of early 1980s, the nature of corruption is changing. Ignoring attitude of the public about the governance process is the only thing behind the development of corrupt practices. The stakeholders don't have the knowledge about the services provided by the governance actors but these actors have the full knowledge of their subject as well as the technical flaws of the policies, programmes, projects and processes. So, that they start to get benefit of their knowledge and the lack of citizens knowledge in the sense of corrupt practices. The governance actors start to hide information and disclose them by taking undue benefits. The government has adopted number of legislations and machinery to control corruption but it has highlighted its ugly head at all the places from time to time. So, e- governance can be helpful in minimizing corruption due to its inherent advantage. It is providing the choice of accepting information and utilizing the services provided by the government to the citizens. It takes away the discretion of the government to give information as well as empower citizens to access information as per their requirements. E- governance simplify the governance process, provides transparency through online service delivery system, reduce the involvement of middlemen in governance process, make easy and cost effective grievance redressing process etc. Ultimately, e- governance process provides maturity in information management, interaction between the service providers and stakeholders, transaction as well as transformation of governance practices. All these things lead to reduce in corrupt practices in governance process.

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