Corruption Free India

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I would like to begin by stating that the topic itself is a Utopian concept and represents a state of affairs which may not be practically possible.

The dictionary definition of corruption is: The immoral or dishonest exploitation of power or position for personal gain.

This gain is normally construed as gain of money. However, it actually would include all forms of gain - monetary and non-monetary. So even the phone call from an influential uncle to get an emergency quota ticket on a train or a priority darshan at Tirupathi, normally given to influential government servants, politicians or businessmen would come under corruption. Most of such actions do not involve the transfer of any money and culturally most Indians do not consider these acts as either immoral or dishonest but the honest truth is that they are a form of corruption.

So to be practical, I am going to just focus on corruption in the government involving politicians and government servants and suggest a solution for it.

I feel that most corruption in the government is a result of the lack of transparency in the system coupled with obsolete bureaucratic processes and rules which the common man cannot understand, nor is he aware of. And this complex system is then manipulated by dishonest people for personal gain. The complexity and the lack of transparency in the process ensure that it is very difficult to track the corrupt individuals and this encourages more and more corruption resulting in a rotten system.

Over the last few years the Right to Information Act (RTI), the media and the courts have been instrumental in exposing big-ticket corruption like the 2G scam etc. However, the efforts have not been effective enough to create a corruption free India because of the bureaucratic roadblocks, legal framework and cost of collecting the information, etc.

My solution is to use the Internet, Innovative Software Applications and Data Analytics to create a modern 21st century infrastructure which makes it easy for people to use the RTI and existing or new laws to collect information and expose it thereby creating a big disincentive for corrupt people. The sheer transparency and ease of access will ensure that even within the existing legal framework we can achieve a corruption free India.

Aadhaar is in the process of revolutionising delivery of government subsidies and ensuring that the subsidies reach the targeted population and in the process would remove corruption to a great extent. The massive investment of over Rs. 15,000 Cr in it is expected to be recovered in just a few months. This has been confirmed by Pilot studies and this is only 2-years old.

Similarly, the government should provide extremely fast broadband and wireless internet availability across the length and breadth of the country but with subsidized rates (as it does the NREGA or diesel subsidies) and ensure that Internet access is available at extremely low prices, if not for free.

Government should also think of subsidising private individuals, companies or even NGOs by encouraging them to develop e-governance applications which involve extensive use of document management systems and work-flow based decision making systems. Data-Analytics can be incorporated into these systems to throw-up red-flags which can be further investigated through case dossiers created by a team of highly trained auditors - under the existing CAG of the state or centre, who have been specifically recruited for such a job.

This should be a public initiative, headed by a prominent professional or a group of high quality professionals. And I am sure this public initiative will attract great individuals who will create great applications leading to big difference.

It should then ensure that the entire e-governance process is available for public view on freely available public portals with options to download the contents of any file. Being easily accessible to the public should be the

key to the entire project. The government can install terminals with Internet access at all government offices which can be used by the public for free. It can also license NGOs or even private individuals to provide the same service of searching and downloading in a system similar to what IRCTC does.

The computer application will include the scanning of the pages of the actual files including the file-noting and also track the date and timings of the movement of the file as a work-flow. Note that for the cases where privacy of individuals and/or secrecy is involved, adequate checks and balances can be incorporated.

In short, an extremely transparent system where nothing is hidden from public view will be created and made available at extremely low prices or for free. This system can be incorporated into the RTI act as it basically does the same thing but in a different manner.

If this is also accompanied by a LOKPAL sort of system where the information collected can be examined and action taken if anything is found amiss, it would scare the daylights out of all the corrupt people involved. However, even without a LOKPAL the sheer transparency of the system will ensure that corruption in India is reduced.

Once the politicians and government servants get the strong message that it will be a very easy process for the masses to find out if the system has been manipulated for personal gain, then actual change will start happening.

Those who have entered politics or the government for personal gain will no longer contest elections or join government service as it will no longer be a profitable option for them. A new breed of politicians and government servants will then replace them - people who will be relatively honest, resulting in a corruption free government.

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> Every man who knows how to read has it in his power to magnify himself, to multiply the ways in which he exists, to make his life full, significant and interesting.
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> *- Aldous Huxley*