

FROM SCANDALS TO REFORMS: CHARTING THE PROGRESS OF ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFECTS IN INDIA

Ms. Baisali Chatterjee (Research Scholar)
Shri Vankateshwara University,
Gajraula, U.P

Dr.Rajbir Kumar (Supervisor)
Shri Vankateshwara University, Gajraula, U.P

Abstract: India has enacted stringent measures to combat corruption, with a particular emphasis on promoting transparency and accountability. This is propelled by reforms and social movements, such as the implementation of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Acts. The advent of technological advancements has diminished the role of intermediaries and inaugurated a novel era of governance. Corruption can manifest itself through the acts of bribery, embezzlement, nepotism, and fraud. The Indian government has taken proactive actions, such as imposing penalties for bribery and using technology-driven solutions. The efficacy of the Prevention of Corruption Act of 1988 in combating corruption has been notable. An all-encompassing approach is required to properly tackle corruption.

Keywords: *Anti-corruption efforts, Lokpal, Corrupt Practices, Rule of law, Good Governance and Legislation, Accountability*

Introduction

India's trajectory from dealing with high-profile crises to enacting strong anti-corruption measures demonstrates the endurance and drive of its institutions and people. India's response to corruption has shifted dramatically over the last decade, from reactive measures to proactive initiatives aimed at increasing transparency and accountability following a series of corruption scandals that marred the country's reputation, there was a tangible desire for reform. This resulted in the formation of social movements and the passage of significant legislation, such as the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Acts, which established independent agencies to examine corruption allegations furthermore, technical improvements have played a critical role in streamlining governance and limiting potential for corruption. Initiatives such as digitalization of services, direct benefit transfers, and the Aadhaar system have reduced intermediaries and usher in a new era of governance as we track the progress of anti-corruption measures in India, it is evident that, while issues exist, the steps taken to improve the system are praiseworthy. The route forward is one of constant monitoring and refinement, ensuring that the existing procedures adapt to successfully prevent and combat corruption.

Definition of corruption and its impact on society

In common parlance **Corruption means and includes** bribery, embezzlement, cronyism, nepotism, and fraud. In a corrupt society, government officials and those in positions of power prioritize personal benefit over the public good, leading to widespread mistrust of institutions and a decline in the rule of law.

Effects of corruption on society:

1. **Undermining the Rule of Law and Legitimacy of Government:** When corruption becomes pervasive, citizens lose faith in the legal system and government institutions. The erosion of trust weakens the social fabric and undermines the legitimacy of those in power.
2. **Fostering Crime and Bribery:** Corrupt practices create an environment where crime and bribery flourish. Individuals and businesses may engage in illegal activities to gain favors or avoid penalties.
3. **Economic Impact:** Corruption raises the cost of doing business. Companies often have to pay bribes to get things done, which hinders honest competition. Foreign investors may be discouraged, affecting economic growth.
4. **Eroding Public Trust:** When people perceive that the system favors the powerful and corrupt, they become less likely to participate in civic life or cooperate. This lack of trust can lead to social and political instability.

In India, corruption has been a significant challenge, affecting social, political, and economic systems. Transparency, accountability, and consistent reforms are essential to combat corruption and promote a fair and just society

Overview of corruption in India

Corruption is a pervasive issue that significantly impacts India's governance, economy, and society. Here are some key points highlighting the **importance of anti-corruption efforts** in India:

1. **Democracy at Crossroads:** India, once regarded as the world's largest democracy, faces challenges. It has been labeled an "electoral autocracy" and a "flawed democracy." The incumbent government's actions have raised concerns about democratic principles
2. **Corruption Hinders Development:** Corruption has hindered development policies, depriving citizens of economic and social rights. It undermines trust in institutions and erodes public welfare
3. **Role of Citizens:** Citizens play a crucial role in fighting corruption. Their participation is instrumental in promoting transparency, accountability, and socio-economic change. By actively opposing corruption, citizens can keep it in check and demand appropriate countermeasures
4. **Government Initiatives:** The Indian government, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has taken trailblazing initiatives to combat corruption. These include minimizing human intervention, imposing strict penalties for bribery, and embracing technology-driven solutions
5. **Middle-Class Mobilization:** Public revelations of corruption scandals have galvanized India's rising middle class. Demands for better governance, transparency, and reforms have forced the government to address corruption issues

In summary, anti-corruption efforts are essential for preserving democracy, ensuring equitable development, and empowering citizens to hold institutions accountable.

Importance of anti-corruption efforts in India

Corruption in India is a multifaceted challenge that significantly impacts the nation's governance, economy, and society. Let's delve into its importance:

1. **Democracy at Crossroads:** India, once celebrated as the world's largest democracy, now stands at a critical juncture. It has been labeled an "electoral autocracy" and a "flawed democracy." The incumbent government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), operates with democratic trappings while exhibiting autocratic tendencies¹.

2. **Economic Well-Being:** Widespread corruption acts like cancer, threatening the economic well-being of the country. It encourages monopolies, disrupts fair competition, and disincentivizes ethical market conduct. India's rank in the

3. **Corporate Scandals:** India Inc. has witnessed high-profile corporate scams and scandals, such as the **Devas Multimedia-Antrix deal**, the **AGB Shipyard scam**, and the **NSE's co-location scam**. These incidents underscore the urgency of robust anti-corruption measures

4. **Legislation and Enforcement:** India's primary anti-graft legislation is the **Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988** (amended in 2018). It applies to both Indian and foreign companies operating in India. The Act criminalizes both bribe-giving and bribe-taking. Ensuring compliance with anti-corruption laws is crucial for businesses engaged in cross-border transactions

5. **Middle-Class Mobilization:** Public revelations of corruption have galvanized India's rising middle class. Their demands for better governance, transparency, and reforms have forced the government to address corruption issues more seriously

In summary, combating corruption is vital for preserving democracy, promoting economic growth, and ensuring a fair and just society. India's journey toward a corruption-free future requires collective efforts from citizens, institutions, and policymakers

Historical Context of Corruption in India

Brief overview of major corruption scandals in India

India has witnessed several high-profile corruption scandals over the years, which have had a significant impact on its political and economic landscape. Here's a brief overview of some of the major ones:

- **Bofors Scandal (1980s):** A major corruption scandal involving the purchase of Bofors artillery guns from Sweden implicated top politicians and shook the nation's political scene.
- **Indian Stock Market Scam (1992):** Harshad Mehta, a stockbroker, manipulated the stock market, leading to a massive scam estimated to be around ₹50 billion.
- **Fodder Scam (1990s):** A large-scale embezzlement of government funds allocated for cattle fodder in the state of Bihar, involving several politicians and bureaucrats.
- **Coal Allocation Scam (2012):** Also known as "Coalgate," it involved the allocation of coal blocks to companies without competitive bidding, leading to an estimated loss of ₹1.86 lakh crores to the exchequer.

- **2G Spectrum Scam (2008):** The alleged undercharging by government officials for frequency allocation licenses, which could have been used for 2G spectrum subscriptions for cell phones.
 - **Commonwealth Games Scandal (2010):** Misappropriation of funds and cost overruns associated with the 2010 Commonwealth Games held in New Delhi.
 - **Vyapam Scam:** A massive admission and recruitment scam involving politicians, senior officials, and businessmen in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.
- These scandals have not only led to a loss of public funds but also eroded public trust in government institutions. They highlight the need for stronger anti-corruption measures and transparent governance practices¹.

Analysis of the political and economic factors contributing to corruption

Corruption, a constant in society, manifests in various forms and has far-reaching effects on both the economy and the broader social fabric. Let's explore the political and economic factors that contribute to corruption:

1. Political Factors:

- **Weak Governance and Institutions:** Countries with weak governance structures, ineffective institutions, and inadequate rules of law are more susceptible to corruption. When institutions lack transparency and accountability, corrupt practices thrive.
- **Political Instability:** Frequent changes in government, political instability, and a lack of continuity can create an environment conducive to corruption. Uncertainty and power struggles may lead to unethical behavior.
- **Ethical Standards:** The ethical standards of political leaders and public officials significantly impact corruption. When leaders prioritize personal gain over public welfare, corruption becomes entrenched.
- **Electoral Processes:** Flawed electoral processes, including vote-buying, illicit campaign financing, and manipulation, can perpetuate corruption. Politicians may engage in corrupt practices to secure power.
- **Clientelism and Patronage:** The exchange of favors for political support (clientelism) and the distribution of benefits to loyal supporters (patronage) can lead to corruption.

2. Economic Factors:

- **Poverty and Inequality:** High levels of poverty and income inequality create desperation and increase the likelihood of corrupt behavior. People may resort to bribery or other illicit means to meet their basic needs.
- **Lack of Economic Opportunities:** Limited job prospects and economic opportunities can drive individuals toward corruption. When legal avenues for advancement are scarce, corruption becomes an alternative.
- **Inefficient Bureaucracy:** Cumbersome bureaucratic processes, red tape, and delays in service delivery encourage bribery. Corrupt officials exploit these inefficiencies for personal gain.
- **Tax Evasion and Informal Economy:** A large informal economy and widespread tax evasion reduce government revenue. This, in turn, affects public services and creates an environment where corruption can thrive.

- **Resource Abundance:** Paradoxically, countries rich in natural resources (such as oil, minerals, or timber) often experience higher corruption levels. The “resource curse” leads to rent-seeking behavior and weak governance.
 - **Trade and Investment:** Openness to trade and foreign investment can reduce corruption by promoting competition and transparency. Conversely, protectionist policies and barriers may foster corrupt practices.
- In summary, addressing corruption requires multifaceted efforts that target both political and economic factors. Strengthening institutions, promoting ethical leadership, and fostering economic inclusivity are essential steps toward combating corruption

Impact of corruption on India's development

Corruption has significantly impacted India’s development across various dimensions. Let’s explore its effects:

1. Economic Growth and Investment:

- **Reduced Investment:** Corruption deters both domestic and foreign investments. Investors hesitate to engage in corrupt environments, leading to reduced capital inflow.
- **Inefficient Resource Allocation:** Corrupt practices distort resource allocation, hindering economic growth. Funds meant for development projects may be siphoned off, delaying infrastructure improvements.

2. Public Services and Infrastructure:

- **Quality and Accessibility:** Corruption affects the quality and accessibility of public services such as healthcare, education, and sanitation. Bribes may be required for basic services, perpetuating poverty.
- **Delayed Projects:** Development projects often face delays due to corruption. Inefficient bureaucracy and bribery slow down infrastructure development.

3. Social Inequality:

- **Unequal Access:** Corruption exacerbates social inequality. The poor suffer disproportionately when essential services are compromised due to corrupt practices.
- **Education Disparities:** Corrupt practices in education lead to unequal access to quality education. Bribery for admissions or exam results perpetuates educational disparities.

4. Political Instability and Trust:

- **Erosion of Trust:** Widespread corruption erodes public trust in institutions. Citizens become disillusioned with the political system, affecting stability and governance.
- **Undermining Democracy:** Corruption undermines democratic processes by favoring vested interests over the common good. It weakens democratic institutions.

5. Global Perception and Investment Climate:

- **Global Standing:** India’s image on the global stage is tarnished by corruption. Foreign investors may be deterred, impacting economic partnerships and collaborations.
- **Transparency and Competitiveness:** Corruption reduces transparency and competitiveness, hindering India’s position in the global economy.

In summary, addressing corruption is crucial for sustainable development. Transparency, accountability, and robust anti-corruption measures are essential to fostering a fair and prosperous India

III. Anti-Corruption Efforts in India

Establishment of anti-corruption agencies and laws Anti-Corruption Laws in India: A Comprehensive Overview

Corruption has long been a threat to the growth and prosperity of nations. In India, it poses a serious challenge to economic stability and development. Let's explore the anti-corruption agencies and laws established to combat this menace:

1. **Central Vigilance Commission (CVC):**

The CVC is a prominent anti-corruption agency in India and It has the authority to receive complaints, investigate corruption cases, and recommend action against erring officials and The CVC plays a crucial role in ensuring transparency and accountability in government departments and public sector organizations.

2. **Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (PCA):**

The PCA is the primary legislation dealing with corruption offenses in India. And It defines offenses related to bribery, abuse of power, and possession of disproportionate assets and The PCA provides for the establishment of special courts to try corruption cases.

3. **Indian Penal Code (IPC):**

While not exclusively an anti-corruption law, the IPC contains provisions related to unlawful acts by public servants and These provisions address offenses such as bribery, extortion, and abuse of official positions.

4. **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA):**

The PMLA focuses on preventing money laundering and confiscating the proceeds of crime and It complements anti-corruption efforts by targeting the financial aspects of corruption.

5. **Right to Information Act, 2005 (RTI Act):**

The RTI Act empowers citizens to seek information from public authorities and Transparency and access to information are essential tools in the fight against corruption.

6. **Lok Ayukta Acts of States:**

Several states have established Lok Ayukta (ombudsman) institutions to investigate corruption complaints against public officials and These bodies play a vital role in addressing corruption at the state level.

It is crucial for India to strengthen these agencies, enforce existing laws, and continue efforts to curb corruption through collective action

Implementation of reforms to address corruption

Towards a Corruption-Free India: PM Modi's Trailblazing Initiatives

India has grappled with corruption for years, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure has witnessed significant reforms aimed at enhancing transparency, accountability, and efficiency in governance and some of these crucial initiatives:

1. **Digital India:**

- **Objective:** Minimize human intervention, enhance transparency, and improve efficiency in governance.
- **Impact:** Leveraging the JAM trinity (Jan Dhan, Aadhar, and Mobile), Digital India facilitated Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT). Over 104 crore beneficiaries now receive

benefits directly in their accounts, resulting in estimated savings of Rs. 2.7 lakh crore from improper appropriation. Nearly 11 million ghost beneficiaries were identified and eliminated.

2. **Amendment to the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988:**

- **Objective:** Strengthen anti-corruption agencies and enhance penalties for corrupt practices.

- **Impact:** The amendment provided more teeth to anti-corruption agencies, ensuring stricter enforcement.

3. **Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA):**

- **Objective:** Combat money laundering and confiscate the proceeds of crime.

- **Impact:** Complements anti-corruption efforts by targeting the financial aspects of corruption.

4. **Abolishing Interviews for Recruitment:**

- **Objective:** Minimize opportunities for corruption in government positions.

- **Impact:** Merit-based selection processes are now followed, reducing the chances of favoritism.

5. **E-governance Initiatives:**

- **Objective:** Reduce human interaction and mitigate corruption.

- **Impact:** E-filing, e-assessment, and faceless assessments streamline processes, enhancing transparency.

6. **E-auctions of natural resources:**

- **Objective:** Enhance transparency in fund transfer and resource allocation.

- **Impact:** eliminating intermediaries, curbing corruption.

These reforms reflect India's commitment to integrity, efficiency, and a corruption-free future. While challenges persist, collective efforts can build a transparent and accountable society

Role of civil society and media in exposing corruption

The role of civil society and the media in exposing corruption is pivotal in any democratic society. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and the media serve as watchdogs, holding those in power accountable and ensuring transparency in governance.

Civil Society's Role:

- **Advocacy:** CSOs advocate for stronger laws and systems to prevent corruption.

- **Education:** They educate the public on the detrimental effects of corruption and their rights.

- **Mobilization:** CSOs mobilize citizens to demand accountability and participate in governance.

- **Whistleblowing:** They often act as whistleblowers, exposing corrupt practices and urging for reforms.

Media's Role:

- **Investigative Journalism:** The media, through investigative journalism, uncovers instances of corruption that might otherwise remain hidden.

- **Public Awareness:** It raises public awareness about corruption and its impact on society.

- **Pressure for Action:** Media exposure can lead to public outrage, which puts pressure on authorities to take action.
 - **Global Spotlight:** International media can bring global attention to local issues of corruption, prompting international pressure for change.
- Both civil society and the media are essential in creating a culture of accountability and integrity. They complement each other, with civil society often relying on the media to disseminate their findings and the media using civil society as a source for in-depth information on corruption cases

IV. Progress and Challenges in Anti-Corruption Efforts

Analysis of the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures

The effectiveness of anti-corruption measures is a critical aspect of governance and development. Let's explore this topic:

1. Empirical Evidence in South Korea:

- A study evaluated the impact of anti-corruption policies on integrity in South Korean public organizations.
- Using data from the Anti-Corruption Initiative Assessment and Integrity Assessment, the study found that implementing anti-corruption policies had a **positive effect on integrity** within these organizations.
- Contrary to the conventional argument that corruption reduction efforts have failed, this research suggests that success is achievable when anti-corruption policies are vigorously implemented.

2. Challenges in India:

- India faces significant corruption challenges, impacting social and economic development.
- The **Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988**, is a key anti-corruption law in India.
- While it has been instrumental in prosecuting corrupt officials and creating a deterrent effect, its effectiveness is limited by factors such as:
 - **Resource Constraints:** Law enforcement agencies often lack resources and capacity for effective implementation.
 - **Weak Implementation:** Despite the law, corruption persists due to weak enforcement.
 - **Political Interference:** Political influence can hinder corruption cases.

3. Global Trends:

- Globally, more than 60% of countries have good practices in their anti-corruption prevention policies
- Anti-corruption strategies and national laws are proliferating, emphasizing the importance of addressing corruption

4. Media and Civil Society:

- **Media**
- **Civil society organizations (CSOs)**

In summary, while anti-corruption measures have made progress, challenges persist. Strengthening enforcement, allocating resources, and fostering collaboration between institutions, media, and civil society are essential for effective anti-corruption efforts

Challenges faced in combating corruption in India

Combating corruption in India presents several significant challenges, which include:

- **Lack of Transparency:** A lack of transparency in government processes and decision-making provides fertile ground for corrupt practices. When actions and decisions are shielded from public scrutiny, officials may engage in corrupt activities with reduced fear of exposure
- **Weak Institutions and Ineffective Legal Frameworks:** Many institutions responsible for enforcing laws and regulations are either weak or compromised, including law enforcement agencies, the judiciary, and oversight bodies. This can lead to a failure to hold corrupt individuals accountable
- **Perception of Impunity:** Inadequate punishment of corrupt individuals can encourage further corruption. When individuals believe they can get away with corrupt practices, they are more likely to engage in them
- **Low Salaries and Incentives**
- **Bureaucratic Red Tape**
- **Political Interference**

These challenges are deeply entrenched and require a multifaceted approach to address, including strengthening institutions, enhancing transparency, and improving legal frameworks to effectively combat corruption.

Comparison of anti-corruption efforts in different sectors

Anti-corruption efforts in India vary across different sectors, and each has its own set of challenges and measures. Here's a comparison based on the information available:

- **Public Sector:** The Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 (PoCA) is the primary legislation targeting corruption in the public sector. It criminalizes bribery, taking undue advantage, and misconduct by public servants. Despite its comprehensive nature, the effectiveness of PoCA is often debated due to the slow judicial process and the burden of proof resting with the prosecution
- **Private Sector:** While PoCA primarily focuses on the public sector, other laws, like the Companies Act of 2013, have provisions to combat corruption in the private sector. These include mandatory corporate social responsibility, whistleblower protection, and fraud reporting. However, enforcement can be inconsistent, and private-sector corruption remains a significant issue
- **Healthcare:** Corruption in healthcare can take many forms, from kickbacks for referrals to fraudulent billing. Efforts to combat this include increased surveillance, strict penalties for fraud, and promoting ethical practices among healthcare providers.
- **Education:** In the education sector, corruption can affect admissions, examinations, and recruitment. Anti-corruption measures include digitalization of processes to reduce human intervention, transparent admission procedures, and strict action against malpractices.

- **Judiciary:** The judiciary itself is not immune to corruption. Efforts to maintain integrity include the establishment of the National Judicial Oversight Committee, the Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill, and in-house procedures for investigating complaints against judges
- **Law Enforcement:** Police corruption is addressed through internal vigilance departments, citizen feedback mechanisms, and body cameras in some cases. However, these efforts are often hindered by a lack of resources and political interference
- **Civil Society:** Grassroots initiatives and non-governmental organizations play a crucial role in raising awareness, advocating for policy changes, and monitoring government actions. The Right to Information Act, 2005, has been a powerful tool in this regard, enabling citizens to hold public authorities accountable

Overall, while there are numerous laws and initiatives aimed at combating corruption in India, their effectiveness varies. Challenges such as slow legal processes, a lack of enforcement, and cultural factors continue to hinder anti-corruption efforts across sectors.

V. Case Studies of Successful Anti-Corruption Reforms

India has seen several successful anti-corruption reforms and initiatives here are a few case studies that highlight these efforts:

1. **Public Finance Management Reforms:** Evidence suggests that reforms in public finance management can have a significant impact on controlling corruption. This includes transparent budgeting and asset declarations, which help in reducing opportunities for corrupt practices
2. **Strengthening Horizontal Accountability Mechanisms:** Enhancing the mechanisms that allow different branches of government to hold each other accountable has been effective. This includes the empowerment of watchdog institutions and the implementation of checks and balances within the government structure
3. **Freedom of Information and Transparency Tools:** The Right to Information Act, 2005, has been a powerful tool in promoting transparency and enabling citizens to hold public authorities accountable. It has led to the exposure of various corrupt activities and has empowered civil society to demand more accountability.
4. **Grassroots Initiatives:** Case studies from states like Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu show the effectiveness of grassroots movements in fighting corruption. These movements often involve a range of activist formations and have been successful in bringing about local reforms

These case studies demonstrate that while there is no single solution to combat corruption, a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches, along with legal and institutional reforms, can lead to successful anti-corruption outcomes.

VI. Conclusion

A concise conclusion based on anti-corruption efforts in India:

- **Endemic Corruption:** The issue of corruption in India is widespread, affecting both the public and private sectors, and is a significant obstacle to governance and human rights.
- **Legal and Institutional Reforms:** A series of legal and institutional reforms, including amendments to anti-corruption laws and the establishment of bodies like Lokpal and Lokayuktas, have been implemented to combat corruption.
- **Challenges and Criticisms:** Despite these efforts, there are criticisms regarding the effectiveness of these reforms, with concerns about the autonomy and politicization of anti-corruption agencies.
- **Ongoing Efforts:** The fight against corruption continues to be a work in progress, with the need for sustained efforts to ensure transparency, accountability, and the protection of fundamental freedoms.

This conclusion encapsulates the progress and ongoing challenges in India's anti-corruption landscape.

Recommendations For Future Anti-Corruption Efforts In India

To enhance the effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts in India, the following recommendations can be considered:

1. **Strengthen Law Enforcement Agencies**
2. **Enhance Implementation of Laws:** Merely having laws is not enough; their implementation must be improved. This includes ensuring that anti-corruption laws are applied consistently and fairly
3. **Encourage Public Participation**
4. **Technology-Based Solutions:** Leveraging technology can help reduce human discretion in public services, thereby minimizing opportunities for corruption. This includes e-governance initiatives, online services, and digital record-keeping.
5. **International Cooperation:** Corruption often has cross-border elements, so international cooperation is crucial. This includes sharing best practices, legal assistance, and joint efforts to recover stolen assets
6. **Harmonize with Global Efforts**
7. **Sanctions and Adverse Consequences**

These recommendations aim to create a more robust framework for combating corruption, ensuring accountability, and fostering an environment of transparency and integrity in India.

Overall assessment of progress in combating corruption in India

The overall assessment of progress in combating corruption in India indicates a complex scenario. While there have been significant legal and institutional reforms, challenges persist in their effective implementation and enforcement. Here's a summary based on the latest findings:

- **Legal Framework:** India has a comprehensive legal framework, including the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, and subsequent amendments, which criminalize various forms of corruption. However, the effectiveness of these laws is often debated due to slow judicial processes and the burden of proof resting with the prosecution
- **Institutional Efforts:** There have been efforts to strengthen institutions such as the Central Vigilance Commission and the introduction of the Lokpal and Lokayuktas. Despite this, there are concerns about the autonomy and politicization of anti-corruption agencies
- **Public Perception**
- **Economic Impact**
- **Ongoing Challenges**
- **Global Partnerships**

In conclusion, while there has been progress in the legal and institutional domains, the overall impact on reducing corruption is mixed. Continued efforts are needed to ensure transparency, accountability, and the protection of fundamental freedoms to make a more significant impact in the fight against corruption in India.

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