

# The Anti-Corruption Movement in India

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## Introduction

*“Social movements are understood as organised collective efforts working towards achieving change. All social movements have an ideology to identify what is wrong with the present and what needs to be done in the future.” (Judge P., 2011)*

One of the most recent social movements witnessed in India was the campaign on 'India against Corruption', spearheaded by a group of social activists led by an octogenarian Gandhian – Anna Hazare. Anna Hazare, a follower of Gandhian principles, opted for fasting unto death and demanded the enactment of the long pending *Jan Lokpal*<sup>2</sup> Bill (Anti-Corruption Law). The movement is considered to be a milestone in the constitutional history of India forcing the government to accept civil society's demand to have a say in drafting the stringent anti-corruption law, the Lokpal Bill. Interestingly, the movement also successfully galvanised mass support and enticed the media took up the topic so much so that today corruption is highlighted as a major social issue in India, after remaining invisible for decades after Independence. One remarkable trend that it has exhibited is the shift in the nature of the social movements in India from being predominantly rural to now including urban citizens. The major combatants of the Anna campaign are educated and urbane. Hence, this movement as well as similar citizen's protests, with the educated and conscious youth at their centre demanding accountability and governance reforms has enough potential to make democracy more inclusive and participatory.

The scope of the present study intends to include the following.

- To trace the nature of the contemporary social movements with specific focus on the *anti-corruption movement* in the larger gamut of the history of social movements in India.
- To analyse the points of convergence and divergence between the movements of the last century and the more recent ones of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- To investigate how these sporadic upheavals are being sensationalised and waved away by candid mass support.
- To analyse the specific spaces and relationships (mainly with the government) of these movements and how they are legitimised in the changing socio-economic context of India.

## Trends of Social Movements in India

Social movements generally reflect a series of contentious performances, displays and campaigns by which ordinary people make collective claims as well as participate in public politics, says Charles Tilly. He argues that there are three major elements to a social movement: (a) *Campaigns*: a sustained, organised public effort making collective claims of target authorities; (b) *Repertoire*: employment of combinations from among the following forms of political action: creation of special-purpose associations and coalitions, public meetings, solemn processions, vigils, rallies, demonstrations, petition drives, statements to and in public media, and pamphleteering; (c) *Worthiness, Unity, Numbers and Commitment (WUNC) displays*: participants' concerted public

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<sup>2</sup> Team Anna named the model draft Anti-Corruption Bill as *Jan Lokpal* Bill to differentiate between the government version of the draft Anti-Corruption Bill which is called *Lokpal* Bill.

representation of worthiness, unity, numbers and commitments on the part of themselves and/or their constituencies (Tilly, 2004: pp.3). Again, Ghanshyam Shah views social movements as “*a deliberate collective endeavour to promote change in any direction and by any means, not excluding violence, illegality, revolution or withdrawal into ‘utopian’ community.*” (Shah, 1990; pp. 16)

Twentieth century India witnessed a large number of non-institutionalised collective actions in the form of protests, agitations, strikes, *satyagraha*, *hartals*, *gheraos*, riots etc. which strove for social and political change. Often it is seen, that these subtle acts of protest or agitation, mostly devoid of any organisation or ideology for change, have in course of time generated immensely impactful social movements in India. Both in the pre and the post-Independence period (before and after 1947), India experienced such movements which included peasant, tribal, and dalit uprisings; the list also covers a whole range of women’s, students’ and even middle class movements. Industrial working class movements also occupied considerable space. In the years before 1947, the British colonisers, who represented completely alien racial, religious and linguistic identities, were perceived as the principal enemy; hence, the only aim of all the anti-colonial movements was to transform colonial subjecthood to citizenship of an independent nation. This resulted in the crystallisation of many social movements on a very large scale. (Oommen, 2010; pp.34)

In the early post independent India, land movements occupied considerable space and significance; one of the most popular movements that revolved around land in the early 1950s was the *Bhoodan* (land-gift) Movement initiated by Acharya Vinoba Bhave, an ardent disciple of M.K. Gandhi. “*The movement was an attempt at land reform and it intended to solve the land problem in the country in a novel way by making land available to the most submerged and disadvantaged class of Indian society, the landless and the land poor and the equitable distribution of land by voluntary donations. The movement deriving its inspiration from Gandhian philosophy and techniques, created a sensation in Indian society for a few years by making mass appeal and giving rise to the hope of solving the age old land problem by producing miraculous results in the initial years of its launch. It was an intellectual movement based on the theory of trusteeship and it emphasised on the need of class co-operation in agrarian society.*”<sup>3</sup> The beginning of this historic movement was marked when Ram Chandra Reddy, a local landlord of the Pochampally Village in the Telangana region, offered 100 acres of land to the *harijan* populace of that locality as a response to Vinoba’s call of ‘doing something’ for the landless villagers.<sup>4</sup> Thus began the first round of land-begging for the countless peasants who raised crops on lands that had never belonged to them since times immemorable, but remained poor and hungry forever. The movement ensured a non-violent solution for the land problem by gifting land as donations and thereby also tried to cut across caste and class lines. The movement was an immediate success as it brought happiness to both the giver and the receiver. The donor offered the land, and poor/landless received the donations gratefully. Vinoba visited the landed rich, soliciting the grant of land across villages in Andhra Pradesh. Soon the movement gathered momentum and spread into many states beyond Andhra Pradesh. Within three years, more than 27,40,000 acres of land were collected in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh together and more than 55,000 acres were distributed. Many state governments formed new legislations to cover Bhoodan.<sup>5</sup> Later, the concept of Bhoodan was widened through the initiation of *Gramdan* (village-gift) movement. The movement lasted till 1957 and started waning thereafter. On the whole, the Bhoodan-Gramdan initiative could be considered as a superb attempt at a peaceful and non-violent solution of the basic land problem in Indian society.

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<sup>3</sup> Internet Source: <http://orissa.gov.in/e-magazine/Orissareview/2010/May-June/engpdf/70-72.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Internet Source: <http://www.mkgandhi-sarvodaya.org/bhoodan.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Internet Source: <http://ezinearticles.com/?The-Bhoodan-Movement&id=2026077>

Again, a decade later, almost in the late 1960s, India witnessed one of its most violent movements for land, which was popularly known as the Naxal Movement. Naxalism, started off as a militant peasant uprising, by a section of the Communist Party of India (CPI-M) led by Charu Majumdar and Kanu Sanyal, against the landlords who attacked the farmers in a small village of West Bengal called Naxalbari. This gradually turned into a large mass movement involving around 180 of India's 626 districts. The roots for these conflicts developed from the failure of the implementation of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Schedules of the Constitution of India, which provided for a limited form of tribal autonomy with regard to access to natural resources on their lands; besides, the failure to implement the 'Land Ceiling Laws', which promised to restrict the landholding of landlords and to distribute the surplus land to landless farmers and labourers was another important catalyst for the conflict.

Under the influence of Mao Zedong's, (the Father of the Modern Republic of China) philosophies, the leaders of the movement advocated that the farmers and lower classes must seize power from the so-called 'capitalist' government by dint of an agrarian revolution leading to land reforms and freedom of the poor from the clutches of the landlords. Later, Charu Majumdar also reinforced and spread the Naxal ideology through his writings like the 'Historic Eight Documents'. The Naxalites organised the All India Coordination Committee of Communist Revolutionaries (AICCCR) and peasants' uprisings were organised in several parts of the country. On April 22, 1969 the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) was formed by AICCCR to provide a political platform for the radical factions believing in the Naxal ideology, to highlight various issues for political mobilisation. By the early 1970s, the Naxalite movement had a presence in many states like Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh etc. The government, being worried about the deteriorating law and order situation because of the Naxalite uprisings, however, adopted repressive measures and forcefully dealt with the Naxal upsurge by ruthless police action. In spite of its failure and weaknesses, the movement continued to be described as *"... the front paw of the revolutionary armed struggle launched by the Indian people under the guidance of Mao Tse Tung's teachings"* (Radio Peking broadcast on the Naxalbari uprising on June 28, 1967; Bannerjee, 2002).

A pioneer among the movements in the 1970s was the call for Total Revolution by Jayprakash Narayan, a veteran freedom fighter and an active politician in post-Independence India. The trigger of the movement was a student's upsurge in Bihar led by Narayan, which gradually took the shape of a popular movement known as the Bihar Movement (1974-1977). Soon Narayan gave the call for a peaceful Total Revolution, leading a relentless confrontation against corruption, money, power and the misuse of political authority, which seemed to dominate the national scene even after 30 years of parliamentary democracy (The Hindu, January 7, 2003). In other words, he waged a war against the then Congress Government as well as the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. Consequently, he was detained along with most other opposition leaders and many thousands of activists during the two-year emergency authoritarian regime imposed by Indira Gandhi between 1975 and 1977. He inspired political parties other than the ruling one to combine into a single party called the Janata Party against dictatorship and the suppressing of all freedom under the Emergency. It was his leadership and guidance, which was mainly responsible for the victory of the Janata Party in the March 1977 elections. However, towards the end of his life, the gradual disintegration of the Janata Party and government left him disillusioned till his death in October 1979.

A description on the social movements in India will never be complete if the genre of women's movements is not mentioned. In fact, the women's movement was initiated in India as a part of the social reform movement in the nineteenth century, thanks to the efforts of social reformers like Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar etc. Around the turn of the century, however, women in India were gradually mobilised for participation in public life generally around the issues which concerned them. Slowly the women associated with the Congress Party started demanding political

rights including equal franchise, representation in the legislature etc. Women's organisations like the Women's Indian Association, All India Women's Conference (AIWC), which started working from the 1920s mostly in the field of spreading education and raising awareness among women, continued well in the post-Independence period as well, with branches proliferating all over India.

In post-Independent India in the 1970s, one of the most significant among the women's movements was the Shahada agitation and the subsequent formation of the labour union by the Bhil landless labourers; the trigger for the movement was the rape of two Bhil women by the landlords who were extremely repressive and exploitative in nature. In protest, the Bhil women led demonstrations with militant slogans and revolutionary songs, simultaneously persuading their male counterparts of the necessity to join the Union and developing solidarity against the landlords. Another landmark in the history of the women's movement in India was the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) movement in Ahmedabad by Ela Bhatt, which started in 1972. *"Women involved in various trades in the informal sector were brought together by their shared experiences such as low earnings, harassment at home, harassment by contractors and the police, poor work conditions, non-recognition of their labour to list just a few. Apart from collective bargaining, the movement strove to improve working conditions through training."*<sup>6</sup> The Progressive Organisation of Women (POW) in Hyderabad (1974) embracing the concept of equality and economic independence of women, worked against gender oppressive structures in society like the division of labour on sexual lines, indiscriminate payment structure etc. However, post 1975 India witnessed the development of autonomous women's movement with organisations springing up both in rural as well as urban areas; these uprisings had women's groups as their core which became unique in the history of women's movement because of their alternative vision highlighting the principles of decentralisation and collective participation. In the early 1980s there were protests throughout India against dowry deaths and various other kinds of violence against women. Organisations like *Saheli* and the Forum against Oppression of Women (FAOW), formed during this time, worked consistently using mechanisms like collective activity, consciousness raising etc. Other significant issues generating protest movements included the issue of Sati following Roop Kanwar's immolation in 1987, the Muslim Women's Bill in 1986, alcoholism, wife-beating, sexual harassment, etc. Women's organisations were also involved in environment crises such as the Bhopal gas tragedy of 1985.<sup>7</sup> It is interesting to note that many autonomous women's organisations, have moved far beyond the level of awareness creation and now make attempts to provide alternate support structures to women in need and these include legal aid, counselling, short stay homes etc.

Trade Union movements also occupy quite a huge space both in pre and post-Independent India. In post-Independent India, the contribution of leaders like George Fernandes and Dutta Samant, to name a few, brought the movements into prominence. Fernandes rose to prominence as a trade unionist and fought for the rights of labourers in small scale service industries; he slowly emerged as a key figure in the Bombay labour movement and contributed to the unionisation of some sections of labour in Bombay in the early 1950s. He organised the most notable railway strike when he was the President of the All India Railwaymen's Federation in 1974. It originated in Bombay where the electricity and transport workers as well as the taxi drivers joined the movement. Very soon it also spread to other parts of the country. As a consequence, thousands of leaders and activists including Fernandes were detained. The strike launched directly against the government, created a sense of insecurity in the government and was one of the reasons behind the imposition of emergency in 1975 by Indira Gandhi.

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<sup>6</sup> Internet Source: [http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/2722/13/13\\_chapter%204.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/2722/13/13_chapter%204.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

Another important trade union activist in Bombay was Dutta Samant who joined the Indian National Congress and its affiliated Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) in the 1960s. Under INTUC he successfully and regularly organised labour strikes. However, in 1981 he led a huge strike of the Bombay Mill workers against the Bombay Mill Owner's Association. A large number of mill workers walked out, forcing a closure of the entire industry in Bombay for over a year. Samant demanded that along with wage hikes, the government should also scrap the Bombay Industrial Act 1947. Samant was considered to be a political threat by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi because of his tremendous influence over the working class, hence, the government was determined to reject his demands and hardly any point of negotiation could be reached in spite of the severe economic losses suffered by the industry. After a protracted and destabilising tussle, the strike was dissolved leaving Samant and his allies on the back-foot. The failure of this strike marked the end of his control over the Bombay trade unions.

During the post-Independence period till the declaration of internal emergency (1975-76), the Indian State acted as the initiator of social transformation and economic development. However, from the latter half of the 70s this role of the State faced criticism as the State-sponsored, capital intensive, high-tech model of development led to high rates of displacement and deprivation, particularly among the rural masses (Oommen, 2010; pp.36-37). As a consequence, with the beginning of the 80s, India witnessed a series of issue-based movements, which demonstrated varied yet inter-related experiences, confrontations and approaches towards the then customary notions of development. The decade saw *"...almost all the presumptions of the established development paradigm challenged, by the experiences of 'development' of people, through advanced scientific and social analysis and increased political activity"*(Sangvai, 2007; pp.111). Hence, these issue-based movements clubbed development together with the rights of the marginalised communities and the nitty-gritty of environmental sustainability. Some of the most popular movements of the period included the Chipko Movement, which aimed to save the forest lands in parts of Uttar Pradesh (now Uttarakhand), the Koel Karo Andolan in parts of Bihar (now Jharkhand) against the displacement that would be caused due to the construction of dams etc.. A brief discussion on the above mentioned movements will help gain a clearer understanding of the shift in the nature of movements in the late 70s and 80s.

In the 1970s, an organised resistance to the destruction of forests spread throughout India and was called the Chipko movement. It began in the hills where the forests are the main source of livelihood, since agricultural activities cannot be carried out easily. In fact, an unusually heavy monsoon in 1970 marked a turning point in the ecological history of the Alaknanda Valley region. *"Villagers, who bore the brunt of the damage, were beginning to perceive the hitherto tenuous links between deforestation, landslides and floods. It was observed that some of the villages most affected by the landslides lay directly below forests where felling operations had taken place"* (Shah, 2002; pp.426). However, the first Chipko action took place spontaneously in April 1973 in the village of Mandal in the upper Alaknanda Valley and over the next five years spread to many districts of the Himalayas in Uttar Pradesh. The success achieved by this resistance led to similar protests in other parts of the country. One of the major protagonists and the leader of the movement, Mr. Sunderlal Bahuguna, a Gandhian activist and philosopher, coined the Chipko slogan: 'ecology is permanent economy'. The Chipko protests in Uttar Pradesh achieved a major victory in 1980 with a 15-year ban on green felling in the state's Himalayan forests by the order of the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. Besides, the movement put a stop to the felling of trees in the Western Ghats and the Vindhyas and successfully generated pressure for a people and ecology sensitive natural resource policy.

On the other hand, the Koel Karo Struggle remains a testament to the will of the indigenous people in the eastern part of India, who used various means to resist the building of a hydroelectric project that threatened to destroy their lives, livelihood and cultural roots. The two dams proposed for the project in the basins of the rivers Koel and Karo, located in then Bihar (now in Jharkhand) would have submerged not only villages, but also sources of livelihood and sites of historical significance. Apprehending the losses, the people began to organise themselves and created the “*Jan Sangarsh Samiti*” in the Koel area (District of Gumla) and the “*Jan Sanyojan Samiti*” in the Karo area (District of Ranchi) which merged as the “*Koel Karo Jan Sangathan*” (KKJS) in 1976. The movement continued for more than three decades and it was only on July 21, 2010 that the final and formal closing of the Koel-Karo project was called. Since its inception, the KKJS maintained its role as a social organisation, involving itself in the day to day affairs of the members of the community, initiating cooperatives in several villages and involving themselves in the overall developmental activities of all villages in the area. The Koel Karo resistance was widely lauded for having forced the government to withdraw a hydroelectric project, which was a rare success in India. *“The resistance that the people mounted represents the community’s ability to form active organisations, to resist a variety of government machinations, to exhibit the strength of community solidarity, and finally, to remain uncompromising in its aim of closing down the project. Its success remains an inspiration for other social movements in India and beyond”* (Mathews, 2011).

Thus, it is seen that notions of ‘development’ brought forth the displacement of the indigenous communities from their traditional lands and livelihoods and depletion of natural resources as off shoots. The concomitant to these processes, a struggle for survival, for dignity, for rehabilitation and resettlement, had spread its roots in the Indian soil throughout the 70s and 80s. In other words, on the whole, these movements which can be termed people’s movements, articulated voices against the unsustainable use of natural resources, disempowerment and displacement of the marginalised communities.

The decade of the 90s, however, was accompanied by the ‘new economic policy’ and its associated ripples of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. This led to the formation of forums like the *Azadi Bachao Andolan*, which opposed the blitzkrieg of national and multinational capital. Similar upheavals at a later date can be traced to the anti-SEZ (Special Economic Zone) movements as well. The anti-communal movements embracing secularism post-90s and even at the onset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are also worth mentioning. Parallel to this trend ran a series of anti-war and pro-peace movements built on the notions of national security more specifically in the context of world-wide imperialism.

However, the Naxal insurgency of the mid 1970s continued into 21<sup>st</sup> century India. In fact, these Maoist revolts have become one of the most fundamental problems threatening India’s internal security. There have been regular attempts by the Maoists to ambush the police, attack railway lines and factories aimed at crippling economic activity. Almost 6,000 people have been killed in such insurgencies in the last 20 years. It has been estimated that in 2004 the Maoist forces consisted of *“9,300 hard core underground cadre... [holding] around 6,500 regular weapons beside a large number of unlicensed country-made arms”*<sup>8</sup> and in 2006, *“figures (in that year) put the strength of the movement at 15,000, and claim the guerrillas control an estimated one fifth of India’s forests, as well as being active in 160 of the country’s 604 administrative districts.”*<sup>9</sup> Near the end of 2009, the Indian government adopted repressive and forceful measures to combat the Maoists, reigning in the

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<sup>8</sup> Judith Vidal-Hall, “Naxalites”, in *Index on Censorship*, Volume 35, No. 4 (2006), pp. 73-75

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*

'Red Corridor'<sup>10</sup> region of India. In retaliation, on April 6, 2010, the Maoists launched one of the most brutal attacks in the history of Naxalite movements in India killing around 75 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel in the state of Chhattisgarh. On 17 May, 2010, the Maoists burnt a bus on the Dantewda-Sukhma road in Chhattisgarh, killing 15 policemen and 20 civilians. Their third major attack was on 29 June, 2010 where 26 personnel of the CRPF were killed in Narayanpur District of Chhattisgarh. In spite of all the harsh counter-attacks by the Maoists, the then Union Home Minister, P. Chidambaram, was confident of curbing Maoism within a few years; he even declared that the year 2011 experienced a 'historic low' level of terror and Naxalite related violence in the affected states.<sup>11</sup> The Madhya Pradesh Government also claimed that there was a positive change in the "Naxalite-affected areas" in the state where development related works were given priority (Deccan Chronicle, December 31, 2011). However, the Maoist movement in the country received by far its biggest blow with the demise of its leader Kishenji who was the kingpin behind the Lalgurh Movement in West Bengal. He was also active in Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh (The Hindu, November 25, 2011). However, Maoist activities have not completely ceased especially with the continuation of incidents like the kidnapping of Italian tourists in Odhisa, landmine blasts and the ambush of CRPF personnel in Maharashtra.

Thus it is seen that India has seen many social movements of various kinds, many of which, by nature, have been *"more diffuse, less focused, more heterogeneous, less planned and directed, and often have a strong element of spontaneity"* (Khan, 1997; pp.14). In general, these movements represent a politics of deprivation, *"a politics of the poor and marginalised in an endeavour to make life more efficient, elegant, and contented for everybody – as against the injustice, disparity and vulgarity inherent in the prevalent capitalist and consumerist development politics"* (Sangvai, 2007; pp.113). In fact, the roots of the anti-corruption movement can also be traced to a similar ideology of creating a corruption-free country and thereby guaranteeing the common people of India a conducive environment and a better place to live in. However, at the same time, the Anna movement is very different from the people's movements that India has seen from time to time. The current study will give a brief description of the 'India against Corruption' movement, its context/background, leadership, objectives, trajectory and nature.

## **Anti-Corruption Movement in India**

### *Corruption in India*

Corruption *"deepens poverty, it debases human rights, it degrades the environment, it derails development, including private sector development, it can drive conflict in and between nations; and it destroys confidence in democracy and the legitimacy of governments. It debases human dignity and is universally condemned by the world's major faiths."*<sup>12</sup> In other words, as per the definition given by the World Bank in 2000, corruption is the "abuse of public office for unauthorised private gain" (Yadav, 2011). Quite disappointingly, such trends are widely practiced in India, irrespective of successive attempts made by the various governments that have been formed since Independence, to eradicate corruption. In fact, the dynamics of corruption in Indian democracy are multi-faceted. Corruption has destabilised the effectiveness of all institutions of governance in India thereby debilitating the rule of law and access to justice (Raj Kumar, 2011). In fact, the roots of corruption in post-Independence India lay in its economic policies that continued to operate till the late 1980s.

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<sup>10</sup> The Red Corridor is a region in the east of India that experiences considerable Naxalite Communist insurgencies. These are also areas that suffer from the greatest illiteracy, poverty and overpopulation in modern India, and cover parts of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal

<sup>11</sup> Internet Source: [http://m.indianexpress.com/story\\_mobile.php?storyid=894321](http://m.indianexpress.com/story_mobile.php?storyid=894321)

<sup>12</sup> The Durban Commitment to Effective Action against Corruption; it was signed at the Anti-corruption Conference in October 1999 sponsored by Transparency International



Over-regulation, protectionism, and government ownership of industries led to slow economic growth, high unemployment, and widespread poverty. This system of bureaucratic control by the government has in course of time generated endemic corruption in the country. The absence of political will and sincerity has also been instrumental in the flourishing of corruption in India.

Corruption has taken the shape of a fundamental problem affecting the social fabric as well as the political framework of Indian society. Hence, it can be found both on a large scale undermining fairness in governance and also at the micro level affecting the lives of every common citizen on a day to day basis. *"... it is a well-known fact that without paying bribes, it is difficult to get anything done in any office or institution. In a study of petty corruption, India prominently figures among the thirty most corrupt nations in the world."* (Raj Kumar, 2011; pp. 97) In a way, corruption in India has led to lack of transparency and accountability so far as public institutions are considered, thereby leading to an empowered bureaucracy and deep-rooted abuse of power. Hence, it is not surprising to hear of the controversies related to the 2G spectrum allocation<sup>13</sup> or the Commonwealth Games<sup>14</sup> in India. Against such a backdrop, the outbreak of the Anti-Corruption Movement in 2011 was extremely relevant and in no time, it captivated the imagination of the masses and spread like wildfire.

#### *Anna's life and history: A critical push to the movement*

The anti-corruption movement, led by Kisan Baburao Hazare, more popularly known as Anna Hazare, was designed to highlight the issue of corruption, a reigning phenomenon in post-Independence India as mentioned above. Before discussing the objectives and trajectory of the movement, some light should be thrown on the life and history of its primary protagonist Anna Hazare, his people-centred and people-controlled perspectives as reflected in Ralegaon Siddhi, his long-drawn anti-corruption agitations against the political society of Maharashtra and his adopting of 'Gandhian' methods of protest. It is Hazare's philosophy and principles that gave the initial push to this citizens' eruption, which later became a country-wide call for a corruption-free India. *"His fast unto death became the rallying point for a nationwide movement and forced the government to form a joint committee to draft the Lokpal Bill."*<sup>15</sup>

The Times of India on April 7, 2011 wrote about Anna Hazare (a person who) *"calls himself a fakir - a man who has no family, no property and no bank balance. He lives in a 10ft x 10ft spartan room attached to the Yadavbaba temple in Ahmednagar's Ralegaon Siddhi village, 110km from Pune and wears only khadi... But when 71-year-old Kisan Baburao Hazare alias Anna starts an agitation, every leader from Mumbai to Delhi sits up and takes notice. Even his detractors and politicians, who hate his guts, grudgingly accept he is the only person who has the power to mobilise common people across the country and shake up a government."*<sup>16</sup> Born in 1940 in the family of an unskilled labourer, he could not finish his studies after the seventh standard due to financial problems and was forced to earn a living by selling flowers. Simultaneously, he also worked with the vigilantes protecting the poor who were thrown out of their homes by vindictive landlords and their hired *goondas*. Later, he joined the army as a driver during the Indo-Chinese war in 1962. Every year when he used to come

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<sup>13</sup> The 2G spectrum scam involved officials in the government of India illegally undercharging mobile telephony companies for frequency allocation licenses, which they would use to create 2G subscriptions for cell phones. It involved an amount of Rs. 176 crores approximately.

<sup>14</sup> The Commonwealth Games 2010 scam involved Rs 36,000 crores or \$8 billion approximately and the Organizing Committee was proved to be responsible for such a huge fiasco.

<sup>15</sup> Internet Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/specials/anna-hazare-the-guest-editor/top-headlines/I-was-re-born-in-the-battlefield-of-Khem-Karan/articleshow/8002771.cms?>

<sup>16</sup> Internet Source: [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-04-07/india/29392266\\_1\\_indefinite-hunger-delays-in-government-offices-anna-hazare](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-04-07/india/29392266_1_indefinite-hunger-delays-in-government-offices-anna-hazare)



back to his native place Ralegaon Siddhi on leave, he slowly realised the deteriorating conditions in the village and the poor quality of life of the villagers. At times, he used to be frustrated with life and wondered about the very existence of human life. *"As a young man, I saw people craving for material goods. Mera bhi mera, tera bhi mera (What's mine is mine, what's yours is mine too) - was their motto. When you die, you take nothing with you. Yet everybody hankered for more. I kept questioning myself: why do we behave like this? What is the purpose of life?"* he recalled.<sup>17</sup> However, he found no answers to his questions and his frustration reached such a level that one night he even contemplated suicide. Gradually, he became attracted towards the philosophy and preaching of Swami Vivekananda and slowly started understanding the meaning of a worthwhile life. *"I bought a book on his ideas. After reading it, I realised that serving the poor means serving God. After that, jeewan ka dhaga haath mein aa gaya (I got a hold on life),"* said Hazare<sup>18</sup>. Meanwhile, during the Indo-Pak war of 1965, he survived a fatal road accident. He considered this incident as an indication from the Omnipotent who by gifting life back to him wanted him to dedicate the same in the service of the masses.

Soon Hazare retired from the army and came back to Ralegaon Siddhi in the mid-1970s which at that time was in the grip of drought, poverty, crimes and alcoholism and continuing migration to urban slums. He used his savings for developmental work in the village which included the banning of liquor, excessive grazing by cattle and the felling of trees. His primary objective was to make the villagers self-sufficient; hence, he motivated the villagers into voluntary labour. Canals and bunds were built to hold rainwater, which solved the problem of water scarcity and also increased irrigation possibilities in the village. He promoted milk production as the secondary occupation of the village. He also worked to increase the literacy rate and education levels within the village and added one pre-school and one high school to the already existing primary school. Even the social evils like untouchability and discrimination on the basis of caste were largely eliminated in the village under his leadership. Thanks to Anna's efforts, Ralegaon Siddhi from a barren village was slowly transformed into a unique model of rural development. This achievement won him the Padma Bhushan Award from the Government of India in 1992.

It was during this process of metamorphosing Ralegaon Siddhi that Anna first directly experienced the problem of corruption in government offices. He came to know how the concentration of power in the hands of the gram panchayat, instead of the gram sabha (the people's council), resulted in corruption leading to injustice and poverty among villagers. He soon took the pledge of fighting corruption at all levels and advocating for pro-people laws, and initiated a relentless campaign under the banner of 'Bhrashtachar Virodhi Jan Andolan' (Citizens' Crusade against Corruption). This led to a series of exposes of bureaucrats and ministers that often embarrassed the Maharashtra Government and compelled it to introduce better laws. His first scuffle, in 1991 (when Sharad Pawar was the Chief Minister of Maharashtra), was against 42 forest officials operating on behalf of timber merchants; this led to large-scale suspension and transfers of the guilty officials. In 1993, Hazare directly attacked Sharad Pawar and accused his government of corruption. Again, in 1995-96 he protested against the Shiv Sena-BJP government in Maharashtra leading to the suspension of two ministers. In 2003, he raised his voice against four corrupt ministers in the NCP-Congress government in Maharashtra which resulted in a judicial enquiry against them.<sup>19</sup>

Simultaneously, from 1998 to 2006, Hazare campaigned for the amendment of the Gram Sabha Act with the idea of reinforcing people's voices regarding any kind of development work within the

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<sup>17</sup> Internet Source: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/specials/anna-hazare-the-guest-editor/top-headlines/I-was-re-born-in-the-battlefield-of-Khem-Karan/articleshow/8002771.cms?>

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Internet Source: <http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?271254>

villages. Though the state government initially refused, yet gradually due to public pressure, the Act was amended. According to the new regulation, seeking sanction from the gram sabha for expenditure on development works in the village is mandatory. Another important contribution from Hazare was his crusade for the introduction of the Right to Information (RTI) Act in Maharashtra from 1997 to 2003. He undertook a hunger protest at Azad Maidan in 2003, which culminated in the implementation of the State RTI Act. However, as the initial legislation was ineffective, he continued his campaign and succeeded in setting up an expert citizens' committee to strengthen the law. Subsequently, much of this became part of the national RTI Act, 2005. Besides, he was also instrumental in working out the Prevention of Delay in Discharge of Official Duties Act (enacted in 2006) against red tapism. He was frustrated with the fact that upright government officers were transferred, sometimes within months of being posted to a place, whereas some corrupt and favoured officials stayed in their postings for a protracted period of time. However, according to this new Act, disciplinary action could be taken against ineffective officials as well as officials who were given long, extended postings in one place; they would be monitored in order to avoid their involvement in any corrupt nexus.

Thus, Anna Hazare through his peaceful struggle, using the non-violent weapon of fasting, succeeded in getting some revolutionary laws legislated in Maharashtra. In fact, his choice of non-violent methods of protest has given him the tag of being a 'Gandhian'.<sup>20</sup> He believes that *"The dream of India as a strong nation will not be realised without self-reliant, self-sufficient villages, this can be achieved only through social commitment and involvement of the common man. Building concrete jungles does not mean development as Gandhiji had rightly said. Surely, one needs to live for oneself and the family but simultaneously one owes something to your neighbour, your village and your nation too."*<sup>21</sup> In his personal life also, he has maintained simplicity throughout and has dedicated himself towards social service/ eradication of injustice, discrimination and corruption. Quite logically, his endeavours against corruption, in the course of time, have been up-scaled from the state level (Maharashtra) to the national level targeting the central government and its ministers, some of whose involvement in huge corruption scams have actually helped create an apt platform for the nation-wide anti-corruption movement that was launched in 2011.

#### *Objectives of the movement*

It is a protest against not just the high-level corruption scams like the 2G spectrum allocation controversy or the Commonwealth Games fiasco. It is also a protest against the moral humiliation that the ordinary citizens witness daily when they have to pay bribes in order to move files or get their work done through the government functionaries. The objective behind the agitation is the demand for a legislation, which can facilitate immediate punishment of government officials accused of financial fraud. In addition to this, the protagonists of the movement have also demanded that civil society should be given a say in drafting the Lokpal Bill.

The Jan Lokpal Bill proposes to create institutions called *Jan Lokpal and Jan Lokayukta* at the levels of the central and state governments respectively. All the existing anti-corruption and vigilance agencies will merge into these above mentioned institutions. The Jan Lokpal and Jan Lokayukta will not be advisory bodies, but would be entirely independent institutions with no dependence on the government. They would have administrative and financial freedom and even the discretion to recruit or employ people either from among the government officials or from outside the government. The main objective behind the creation of these institutions would be to ensure that

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<sup>20</sup> There is an ongoing debate regarding Anna being called the 21<sup>st</sup> century Gandhi and his similarities and dissimilarities with M.K. Gandhi (See [http://www.telegraphindia.com/1110621/jsp/opinion/story\\_14136304.jsp](http://www.telegraphindia.com/1110621/jsp/opinion/story_14136304.jsp))

<sup>21</sup> Internet Source: <http://www.knowledgebase-script.com/demo/article-1074.html>

corrupt officials are punished through time bound investigations. Both the Jan Lokpal and Jan Lokayukta would be receiving complaints against their respective government departments accused of corruption and would enjoy the power to impose departmental penalties on bureaucrats. These institutions are designed to provide relief to the common masses against the daily harassment they face while dealing with government departments.

### *Trajectory of the movement (2011 and 2012)*

#### April 2011 fast

Anna Hazare began his 'indefinite fast' on April 5, 2011 at Jantar Mantar in Delhi to reinforce the demand for the formation of a joint committee comprising of representatives of the government and civil society to draft a rigorous anti-corruption bill with penal actions and giving more independence to the *Lokpal* and *Lokayuktas* (Ombudsmen in the states). This agitation was launched after his initial demand was rejected by the Prime Minister. A number of social activists supported Anna's hunger strike. Spiritual leaders like Swami Ramdev, Swami Agnivesh, and Sri Sri Ravi Shankar also extended their support to the anti-corruption campaign. Even former cricketers like Kapil Dev supported the campaign through social media networks. However, Anna made a conscious decision not to share the platform with any politician. Despite this the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Communist Party of India came out in his support. On April 6, 2011, Sharad Pawar, the Union Minister of Agriculture resigned from the group of ministers formed for reviewing the draft Lokpal Bill. Protests spread like wildfire from the Ramlila Maidan, New Delhi to cities like Bangalore, Mumbai, Chennai, Ahmedabad, Guwahati, Shillong and many others. In the face of these protests, the government decided to table the Bill in the Parliament in the forthcoming monsoon session. Finally, on April 9, 2011, the government accepted the inclusion of civil society members, alongside with the government officials in the Bill Drafting Committee. In addition to this, on May 13, 2011, the Prime Minister, declared the completion of the ratification of the UN Convention against Corruption by the Indian Government.

#### Spiritual leader Baba Ramdev's protest

Anna's campaign in April was followed by another protest at the Ramlila Maidan by Swami Ramdev on June 4, 2011. Through this, he reinforced the need for a strong legislation to repatriate the black money supposedly deposited abroad. *"While there is no official estimate available for the magnitude of India's black money, unofficial estimates put the figure at around US\$1.4 trillion (over Rs.70 lakh crore). This amount is more than one year's GDP. Most of this money has been stashed away in banks in 'tax havens' abroad over the last 60 years by politicians, industrialists, bureaucrats and middle-men...The bulk of India's black money is stashed away in secret bank accounts in Switzerland. According to data provided by the Swiss Bankers Association, (but not confirmed by Swiss authorities), India has more black money than rest of the world combined...Pressure has been mounting on the government from opposition parties seeking details of Indian account-holders in Swiss banks and banks in other tax havens."*<sup>22</sup> Ramdev demanded that untaxed money invested abroad should be considered the wealth of the nation and the practice of stashing money in foreign banks should be regarded as criminal activity. After multiple rounds of talks between some of the senior Union ministers and Ramdev, the government decided to comply with his demands, though he later planned to continue his hunger strike. He was, however, forcefully detained and his followers removed from the Ramlila Ground by the police. *"65,000 followers of the yoga teacher had*

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<sup>22</sup> Rao, V. Venkateswara, (2010) Black, bold and bountiful, Business Line; <http://web.archive.org/web/20110511200843/http://www.thehindubusinessline.in/2010/08/13/stories/2010081350370900.htm>

*gathered in solidarity with his cause. They were tear-gassed and lathi-charged. Seventy one people were injured and moved to hospital and four patients were reported to be in critical condition. The Baba was evicted from Delhi... and deposited at his headquarters in Uttarakhand... The BJP has compared the incident to the atrocities committed by the British at Jallianwala Bagh... Others like the CPM who have been staunch critics of Baba Ramdev have also spoken out against "the murder of democracy".<sup>23</sup> On the whole, Ramdev's campaign, though sub-structured in the larger milieu of corruption, was more focused on the 'black money' issue. However, events under Anna's anti-corruption banner took a sharp turn after he decided to launch a 'fast unto death' again from August 16, 2011.*

#### August 2011 events

On June 8, 2011, while observing a day long hunger strike as a protest against the police embargo on Ramdev's supporters, Anna Hazare gave an ultimatum to the government that the Jan Lokpal Bill should be passed by August 15, 2011. If not, he would then begin another indefinite fast from August 16, 2011. *"He accused the government of putting 'hurdles' in the drafting of the Lokpal Bill and trying to defame the civil society members of the joint panel, such as Shanti Bhushan, Prashant Bhushan, Santosh Hegde and Arvind Kejriwal through a 'discreet campaign.'"<sup>24</sup> Towards the end of July 2011, the Union Cabinet approved the Lokpal Bill keeping the office of Prime Minister outside its purview during his term in office and also excluded the higher judiciary and the conduct of Members of Parliament inside the Parliament. *"Expressing disappointment at the government leaving out a majority of the points raised by the civil society, lawyer Prashant Bhushan said the decision to exclude the office of the Prime Minister from the purview of the Bill would not stand scrutiny of the court."<sup>25</sup> This incident further strengthened Anna's decision to fast unto death from August 16, 2011.**

On the morning of 16 August 2011, Hazare, along with his close associates, was remanded to judicial custody and imprisoned for seven days after that. This act was condemned and protests mushroomed across states throughout India. Almost all the non-Congress political parties and non-governmental organisations voiced their grievances. Even the Parliament Houses were adjourned. *"The arrest of anti-corruption crusader Anna Hazare had its echo in Parliament... with the entire Opposition demanding suspension of question hour to discuss the issue and accusing the government of adopting an 'undemocratic' approach."<sup>26</sup> However, in the face of protests all over India, the Delhi Police decided to release Hazare after a week. Over the next twelve days, the Gandhian leader along with his followers launched and continued his hunger protest at the Ramlila Maidan of Delhi with spontaneous support provided by people from all walks of life.*

Following Anna's hunger strike and the nation-wide ripples of remonstrance, a debate on the Jan Lokpal Bill was held in Parliament on 27 August 2011. With Hazare demanding three principles, (i) citizens' charter, (ii) lower bureaucracy to be under Lokpal through an appropriate mechanism and (iii) establishment of Lokayuktas in the states, both houses of Parliament agreed to the principles. *"Winding up the day-long debate, (Pranab) Mukherjee said while a 'respected' Gandhian with 'massive support' was on agitation, it was not always necessary to move in conventional straight*

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<sup>23</sup> Report by NDTV Correspondent, June 6, 2011;

<http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/ramdev-eviction-advani-and-co-pull-an-all-nighter-in-protest-at-raighat-110379>

<sup>24</sup> Press Trust of India, (June 8, 2011), <http://www.hindustantimes.com/News-Feed/newdelhi/Second-freedom-movement-on-long-way-to-go-Anna/Article1-707077.aspx>, Hindustan Times, New Delhi

<sup>25</sup> Parsai, Gargi (July, 28, 2011), <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article2302166.ece>, The Hindu, New Delhi

<sup>26</sup> Dhar, Aarti & Dixit, Sandeep (August 16, 2011), <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article2362611.ece>, The Hindu, New Delhi

*jacket way*".<sup>27</sup> This finally marked the end of the fast, though Anna made it very clear that he was only suspending his fast for the time being and would end it only after a strong Lokpal Bill was passed by the Indian Parliament. *"Parliament has spoken....the will of Parliament is the will of people," said Prime Minister commenting on the development...* In the Lok Sabha, leader of the opposition Sushma Swaraj said, "History has given us an opportunity, which we should not miss. Let us not get into technicalities. We should give this country an effective, strong, free and impartial Lokpal."<sup>28</sup>

December events and continuation of the movement in 2012

Before the commencement of the winter session of the Parliament on December 11, 2011 Anna Hazare sat on a day-long fast at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi, protesting against the proposals made by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the anti-graft measure. The protest for the first time witnessed politicians sharing the stage with the Anna Team. *"Leaders of BJP (115), SP (22), JD (U) (20), CPM (16), BJD (14), TDP (6), CPI (4) and Akali Dal (4) shared the platform with Hazare... Leaders of this group appeared almost united on the issues of bringing Prime Minister, lower bureaucracy and investigation wing of CBI under the proposed Lokpal."*<sup>29</sup>

On December 22, 2011, the Parliamentary sessions in the Lower House (Lok Sabha) witnessed debates and breaches of opinion regarding the Lokpal issue among almost all the political parties present. CPI leader Gurudas Dasgupta warned the government not to take any hasty decision on the Lokpal issue in the face of threats posed by Team Anna and not to compromise the sovereignty of Parliament under any circumstances. On the other hand, Shiv Sena opposed the government draft of the Lokpal Bill stating that the Lokpal should be an extra-Constitutional body accountable to none. The RJD Chief Lalu Prasad Yadav emphasised that the government should include the Muslim minorities in the Lokpal Bill. Later in the day, the government decided to include the minorities' reservation in the Lokpal Bill. Yadav, welcomed the government's move on the minorities reservation issue; he further pointed out that though the government draft of the Lokpal Bill was quite weak, yet it was not at all wise to succumb to civil society agitations. Describing Anna's agitation as a conspiracy against the Constitution, he opined that the ex-Parliamentarians, judiciary as well as the Prime Minister should not be brought under the Lokpal Bill. On the other hand, the BJP opposed the minority quota in the Lokpal Bill. Sushma Swaraj, the leader of Opposition, expressing her disappointment with the Lokpal Bill, and mentioned that the language of the Bill as well as the included religious quota in the Bill both seemed unconstitutional. She also appealed to the government to take back the Bill and redraft it. After these arguments and counter arguments, the government finally withdrew the Lokpal Bill introduced in August 2011 and reintroduced 'The Lokpal and Lokayukta's Bill 2011' along with the 116<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Bill, which also included reservation for minorities and 50 per cent reservation for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and women. *"Hitting out at the government on the 'useless' Lokpal Bill, Anna Hazare challenged Congress chief Sonia Gandhi to a public debate on it to convince people that the proposed legislation is strong... Hazare said the new Bill is of no use if the anti-corruption ombudsman does not have control over CBI and the lower bureaucracy is not brought under its direct control... He said he would go on a three-day hunger strike from December 27-29 and would launch*

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<sup>27</sup> Press Trust of India, (August 27, 2011), [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-08-27/india/29935496\\_1\\_lokpal-bill-anna-hazare-pranab-mukherjee](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-08-27/india/29935496_1_lokpal-bill-anna-hazare-pranab-mukherjee), The Times of India, New Delhi

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Express News Service, (December 12, 2011), <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/8-parties-on-anna-stage-congress-feels-heat/886653/>The Indian Express, New Delhi



"jail bhara" struggle. "My jail bhara protest will be outside the residence of Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi," the 74-year-old activist said."<sup>30</sup>

*"The government was repeatedly telling us that by proceeding with protests while Parliament was considering the Bill, we were showing contempt for parliamentary democracy. We had responded by pointing out that by overlooking the wishes of the people as expressed in numerous polls, surveys and referendums, all of which showed that more than 80 per cent of the people favoured the Jan Lokpal Bill, the government was showing contempt for the people. The drama in the Rajya Sabha showed that the government was not even willing to go by the will of Parliament. This gives rise to fundamental questions about the functioning of Indian democracy. Is this form of representative democracy allowing the will of the people to be reflected in policy and law-making, or is it being held hostage to parties and their leaderships to be determined by their own whims or corrupt considerations? Has the time come for us to rethink and deepen our democracy by putting in place systems where laws and policies would be decided by decisive inputs of the people (through referendums and gaon sabhas, or village councils) rather than only by such "elected representatives"? We hope that this fundamental issue would bring about an even broader public engagement than what has been witnessed during this Lokpal campaign." (See Bhushan, P., The Saga of the Lokpal Bill, (The Hindu, January 2, 2012)<sup>31</sup>*

On December 27, 2011 Sushma Swaraj again "punched holes in the government's Lokpal Bill saying it was anything but a strong and effective law to deal with corruption in the country...It is patently unconstitutional (bill)... deeply flawed and tampers with the basics of our Constitution,"<sup>32</sup> The debate resulted in the Lokpal Bill being passed to the Upper House of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) but the Lokpal was not given Constitutional status as expected. It failed as the government did not manage the two-thirds majority of the members present and voting. Later, the Bill was passed by the President of India as per constitutional norms. However, as the government prepared itself for a tough tussle in the Rajya Sabha, the focal point of its concern was a key partner, Mamata Banerjee, Chief Minister of West Bengal (from Trinamool Congress party). She wanted 14 pages of the Bill to be dropped (which deal with Lokayuktas or anti-corruption agencies at the state level and would violate the autonomy of the states). Meanwhile, Anna Hazare again began his fast demanding a stronger version of the Lokpal Bill at MMRDA ground in Mumbai. However, "smarting under poor response and bad health, Anna Hazare, called off his fast a day ahead of schedule and repeated his threat to campaign against Congress in the five poll-bound states for not bringing a strong Lokpal."<sup>33</sup> Proceedings in Parliament were also stalled and reached a deadlock as the Bill got stuck in the Rajya Sabha and was not passed during the winter session of Parliament.

## 2012 specific events

The Bill was reintroduced during the Budget session of the Parliament in February 2012, but it was not prioritised and the session ended without the Bill being passed. Under these circumstances, Anna once again decided to sit on a day-long fast at Jantar Mantar on March 25, 2012. Blaming the government for its insensitivity and carelessness, he said that the *dharna* at Jantar Mantar would seek protection for whistle blowers, many of whom were killed while exposing corruption cases. Again, on May 1, 2012 Anna began his five-week long tour of Maharashtra to create awareness for a

<sup>30</sup> Agencies, (December 22, 2011), [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-12-22/news/30546789\\_1\\_lokpal-bill-team-anna-lokpal-bench](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2011-12-22/news/30546789_1_lokpal-bill-team-anna-lokpal-bench) The Economic Times, New Delhi

<sup>31</sup> Internet Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/article2766561.ece>

<sup>32</sup> IANS, (December 27, 2011), [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-12-27/india/30560937\\_1\\_lokpal-bill-lokayuktas-weak-bill](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-12-27/india/30560937_1_lokpal-bill-lokayuktas-weak-bill), The Times of India, New Delhi

<sup>33</sup> Press Trust of India, (December 28, 2011), [http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-12-28/india/30564941\\_1\\_jail-bhara-anna-hazare-general-elections](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2011-12-28/india/30564941_1_jail-bhara-anna-hazare-general-elections), The Times of India, New Delhi

strong Lokayukta Bill. Baba Ramdev also launched an agitation from Durg in Chhattisgarh on the same day. He further announced that he would be undertaking a symbolic protest (day-long fasting) along with Anna at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on June 3, 2012. *"We need two andolans to bring back black money and for strong Lokpal."*<sup>34</sup> Both shared the stage that day with a large gathering thereby bringing the focus back on the Jan Lokpal and the issue of black money. However, this token fast was followed by an indefinite one which began on July 25, 2012 by close associates of Anna Hazare. He himself joined the fast from July 29 onwards. *"The aim is to campaign for a Lokpal Bill... the government is only giving us assurances, but takes no action," Anna said, referring to the anti-graft legislation that has been his movement's raison d'etre.*<sup>35</sup> Their agenda was to protest against the government's refusal to launch an inquiry against the Prime Minister and 14 senior Cabinet Ministers, who were accused of corruption. However, the response from the public this time was more subdued as compared to Anna's fast conducted in 2011. However, on August 3, 2012 he broke the fast with a promise to fight for transparency in the system. Soon after, Team Anna announced that it had decided to switch tracks, and instead of trying to pressurize an unresponsive system from out, it would try to reform it from within by forming a political party and contesting elections. Arvind Kejriwal, one of the most prominent faces of Team Anna, commented on their decision to form a political party: *"We call upon Shri Anna Hazare and all his associates, who have been on an indefinite fast, to give up on their expectations from this establishment. Instead, we call upon them to focus their energies on creating an alternative political force that is democratic, accountable, ethical and non-violent and capable of leading an electoral revolution to democratise and decentralise power and make the power structures of the country more accountable to the people."*<sup>36</sup> With the announcement of the formation of a political party, the question that comes to the fore front is whether the movement will be able to continue its sustained struggle on the single issue of corruption. This is because electoral politics will make the anti-corruption team face a range of issues ideologically and not just the one of corruption. An editorial in The Indian Express, however, wrote: *"Time and again, India's politics has reinvented itself by resetting the stage and extending it to accommodate new actors, aspirations and concerns. From the elites that took on the responsibility of giving a government to a newly independent nation, the baton has been handed to a changing cast of players who rode on the backs of popular movements and agitations, be it in the wake of Emergency or after the Mandir and Mandal mobilisations. By stepping out of its self-styled role as the system's holy outsider, and in accepting the imperative of electoral politics and the sovereignty of Parliament, Team Anna could potentially open up this field further.*

*Now that they are openly in politics, it will also be easier to talk to Team Anna and to ask them questions about themselves and where they are coming from. There is much that is still cloaked or unclear. The idea of a party that completely takes the shape of the people's aspirations is a very old democratic ideal, or fiction. The onus will be on Team Anna to show how it can give this old ambition a new meaning, while tackling the pains of transition from a free-flowing agitation to a bounded party. It will have to give this party a name and a manifesto and position it ideologically in a crowded field."*

*"Some observers say that for Team Anna to enter the mainstream political space is exactly what the UPA government and also other political parties want. They are the bigger sharks. They may just end up swallowing Team Anna whole in a game they have played for over 60 years and have mastered. But those are the cynics. Team Anna says coming up with a revolutionary ideal is both*

<sup>34</sup> <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/anna-ramdev-joint-protest-fast-on-june-3/250540-37-64.html>

<sup>35</sup> Internet Source: <http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/team-anna-to-launch-indefinite-hunger-strike-today-for-lokpal-bill-anna-will-join-fast-from-july-29-247251?from=home-lateststories>

<sup>36</sup> Internet Source: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-08-07/india-s-anti-corruption-movement-aims-for-parliament.html>



*essential and brave.” – Revati Laul, Tehelka*

The Congress party, on the other hand, stated that the members of Team Anna always wanted to be in power. Senior Congress leader and Union Shipping Minister G K Vasan mentioned *“The Congress party has been continuously telling for past one year that Anna (Hazare) and his team is interested in politics and they always wanted to be in power.”*<sup>37</sup>

### **The Movement and the Civil Society**

*“Civil society is a collection of individual and collective initiatives for the common public good”.* (Tandon, 2003; pp.64) In other words, civil society can be closely associated to the organised efforts undertaken by the non-government organisations (NGOs); but the anti-corruption movement in the silhouette of a citizens’ initiative, running parallel to the organised form of non-state organisations, has been quite an intrepid component of civil society. It has been able to hold the government accountable highlighting the glitches cropping up in society including corruption and other associated dysfunctions in the government institutions. It has followed a watch-dog profile with a different colour and vigour.

In this context, it is important to analyse the relationship between these two trends, the organised NGOs and the unorganised citizen’s initiatives (anti-corruption movement in this case). The role of some of the NGOs in arranging the basic resources required for organising rallies and campaigns related to the anti-corruption movement cannot be denied. In fact, though Anna Hazare and Swami Ramdev stood in the public limelight, the anti-corruption movement was pre-launched by several campaigns from late October 2010 through late March 2011. This included an anti-corruption press conference organised by the non-governmental organisation. India against Corruption organised at the Press Club of India to highlight the fact that the government appointed Shunglu Committee did not have adequate powers to investigate the Commonwealth Games scam. In January 2011 the former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Chandra Babu Naidu also launched his battle against corruption through his NTR Memorial Trust. All these were incidents which created the robust bedrock upon which Anna later played his techniques.

At the same time, however, it is true that there exists a disjoint between these two trends. The more formally and traditionally organised NGOs are not always willing to associate themselves with these spontaneous movements as such initiatives are considered to be difficult to manage till the end. The Anna upsurge is also not an exception. Nikhil Dey, key member of the National Campaign for People's Right to Information (NCPRI) and the Rajasthan based people's organisation Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), felt that since every political party, including the ruling and the opposition, have charges of corruption levelled against them, it is difficult to think that legislation is the only way to fight corruption. It is much more important for activists to fight against corruption within the movement. A strong and powerful policing agency against corruption will not provide any fundamental benefit to the people. Though it is true that high-level corruption needs a powerful policing agency at the top, yet, extending that to all branches of government and democratic institutions right till the bottom, including grievances, can probably result in a threat to democracy. NCPRI believes that a combination of Bills would be much stronger.” Again, the Loksatta Party President, Dr. Jay Prakash Narayan, on one hand, praises Anna Hazare for not only bringing out, but also activating the middle-class as well as the youth in the battle against corruption. On the other hand, unlike Anna, he feels that there must not be a monolithic institution covering everybody. From the Prime Minister to the clerk, all should not come under one institution. There is a need for a local

<sup>37</sup> Internet Source: [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-08-03/news/33020150\\_1\\_anna-hazare-civil-society-team-anna](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-08-03/news/33020150_1_anna-hazare-civil-society-team-anna)

ombudsman at lower levels. He considers the approach of covering all public servants under one Lokpal to be fundamentally incorrect. He has mentioned that if the Lokpal is invested with unlimited powers then there are chances of justice being delayed; there may be more inefficiency and corruption, which in the end, can defeat the very purpose of the Bill. Social Activist, Aruna Roy repeatedly said that though Anna's movement successfully lit up public sentiment, it lacked the required 'ideological tethering'<sup>38</sup>; she has also criticised the movement as being media-driven.

*As Aruna Roy puts it, "Vesting jurisdiction over the length and breadth of the government machinery in one institution will concentrate too much power in the institution, while the volume of work will make it difficult to carry out its task... in place of a single institution there should be multiple institutions and that a basket of collective and concurrent Lokpal anti-corruption and grievance redress measures should be evolved."*<sup>39</sup>

The relationship of the Anna campaign with the on-going people's movements in India is also characterised by a bit of seclusion. Broadly speaking, dalit/ adivasi movements, crusades around the mining/ industrial projects and securing of rights over forests as well as other natural/ environmental resources and even the unorganised section of workers in India – all have remained isolated from the Anna campaign. The National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM) has not been able to connect themselves with the clearly democratic element in the Anna upsurge (Mohanty, 2011). On the other hand, Anna's upsurge has also been limited in nature and failed to derive support from the dalit, adivasi, minorities' and workers' movements.

The existence of civil society in both the shapes, organised and unorganised, beyond any doubt, offers a significant opportunity. An opportunity for the organised section of CSOs to incorporate the enormous amount of energy, commitment and values generated out of the citizen's initiatives, more specifically in this case the Anna campaign and its spontaneity. How much the scope is utilised though remains an open-ended question.

### **The Movement and the Media**

The anti-corruption movement has often been described as media-fuelled. One of the main differences between the movements of the 1980s and 90s is that the anti-corruption upsurge received the advantage of time. The movement has gathered strength because of the dramatic boom in both electronic and print media. Furthermore, the urban nature of the movement has helped in attracting the attention of the media. Contrarily, during the 1980s and 1990s the only available media was the print media. Moreover, the movements of that period revolved around issues which were more or less rural and local in nature; hence, it was more the local and vernacular media that used to reflect upon and showcase those movements. However, the mainstream, national media remained largely uninfluenced by the movements of that time. As Aruna Roy puts it, *"There is never a TV shot shown of tribals who are mobilised for their causes."*<sup>40</sup>

In contrast to that, the anti-corruption agitation is probably the first movement driven and amplified by the media with '24 x 7' coverage by the electronic news channels. The popularity of Anna's campaign owes a lot to the media which has kept the people all over the world aware of the progress in a consistent manner; *"... minute by minute dramatic developments, the government's flip-flops adding midnight melodrama with the uninterrupted sermons and the sentimental jibes*

<sup>38</sup>Internet Source: <http://news.oneindia.in/2012/01/21/hazare-movement-lacked-ideological-tethering-aruna-roy.html>

<sup>39</sup> Internet Source: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/India-news/NewDelhi/Break-lokpal-into-5-institutions-Roy/Article1-733381.aspx>

<sup>40</sup> <http://news.oneindia.in/2012/01/21/hazare-movement-lacked-ideological-tethering-aruna-roy.html>

*along expected lines from familiar faces on the TV screen”* (Mohanty, 2011; pp.18). Not just the trajectory, but it has also revealed the pulse of the crowds across states throughout India and even abroad. Millions of people have read or watched the drama on television as it unfolded. The non-English electronic and print media, following its historic course, has responded to the campaign positively. Interestingly enough, the English media, probably for the first time in the post-Independence period, has come up pro-actively in showcasing Anna’s upsurge, albeit it has looked at the movement through a critical lens unlike the vernacular media. The issues that have been raised by the media, against the various predominant corrupt practices and the indifference exhibited by the ruling government to punish those associated with it (from politicians to government officials), could successfully capture the imagination of the masses throughout the country, who in spite of not being direct participants, felt connected to the root of the upsurge. The role of mobile telephony and social media sites has also been remarkable in spreading consciousness and educating the masses about their rights.

### **Campaign Against Corruption: A People’s Movement**

Corruption is but *“an insidious plague that... undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to violations of human rights, distorts markets, erodes the quality of life and allows organised crime, terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish”*.<sup>41</sup> The anti-corruption movement, headed by Anna and other civil society actors in India, tends to adopt the shape of a citizen’s initiative representing an unorganised, informal set of repercussions oozing out of the common people against the social evil named ‘corruption’ which is deeply entrenched in the Indian soil. Befitting its original cause, the movement has maintained a distance from other on-going people’s movements in India fighting for democratic rights like the protests and movements around issues of environment, secularism, peace and security, rights and displacement of marginalised communities and even around the Right to Information. These movements though fought for the rights of the marginalised people, have never been able to get so much public support because not everyone in Indian society is affected by these issues. On the other hand, Anna’s movement has been able to attract the common masses irrespective of their socio- economic position, because the issue of corruption has affected people at all levels of Indian society. In fact, the upsurge came as a reflection of their resentment of the daily subjugation to corruption at all levels of government and society as a whole.

Again, the psychological mooring behind the movement gaining such mass support also cannot be denied. Primarily, the anti-corruption agitation has been addressed against the political class, and to a vast majority of people, the State (identified mainly as politicians in or out of government, and the administration) is perceived as being exploitative and often oppressive as against the general middle class aspirations of a pro-people government working for a fair market and good governance. As mentioned earlier, the middle class faces all forms of corruption in their daily lives thereby their hopes and aspirations are destroyed on a regular basis. Quite obviously, the frustration among the middle class people, both in the urban and rural areas across the states in India is rising alarmingly.

Anna’s fast in the Ramlila Maidan, however, brought together not only the middle class groups and civil society organisations, but also a whole lot of ordinary people including the rickshaw pullers, auto-rickshaw drivers, vendors, students and youth; *“... the Anna campaign may have started as an initiative by a group of middle class activists to pass an effective law on curbing corruption, but as soon as the government started rejecting their proposals, it incurred the wrath of the common people and the protest spread to wider sections of society”* (Mohanty, 2011; pp.17). The upsurge

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<sup>41</sup> United Nations Convention Against Corruption (adopted 9 December 2003, entered into force 14 December 2005) GA Res 58/4

could successfully mobilise the urban and the rural population, including both the upper and the lower middle classes in Delhi. The 'dabba-walas of Mumbai and farmers of Haryana and Punjab' (Bannerjee, 2011; pp.12) also felt connected to the cause of the movement, though the Ramlila Maidan, Delhi was the epicentre of the movement; people participated in the demonstrations and rallies staged in support of the movement in thousands throughout the country. The movement has even captured the imagination of the non-resident Indians as reflected by the solidarity demonstrations outside India.

### **The Movement and the Government**

Throughout the course of the anti-corruption movement, the national government has not supported either Team Anna or the other civil society actors who have supported it. Instead, the government has unleashed all sorts of harassment, humiliation and intimidation on the leader Anna Hazare, his colleagues and all those from civil society who were involved in the protests. On a general note, it can be seen that the political class as a whole has not been very willing to create a strong independent ombudsman against corruption. This gesture seems extremely incongruous in a country already inundated by huge corruption scandals including the 2G spectrum and the Commonwealth Games debacles. Consequently, it raises doubts about the involvement of the political parties in the scams. How much the political parties have benefited from the 2G scam and Commonwealth Games projects and how much the ministers or the persons who are actually accused have benefited is a matter that needs to be further investigated (Yadav, 2011). Given the largely 'undemocratic', family-oriented and individual-centric character of most of the political parties in India, addressing the root causes of institutionalised corruption may require reforming the political parties and their public accountabilities in the legislative processes. This requires institutional reforms, many of which have been resisted by the political class over the years. As Yadav tries to point out that the presidents of various political parties in India and their legislative leaders are directly involved in receiving funds from business groups and their lobbyists than has been hitherto implied in the recent anti-corruption discourses. This may make a stronger case for the inclusion of presidents of political parties and their legislative leaders (including the Prime Minister and Chief Ministers) under the new Lokpal legislation.

The first phase of the anti-corruption movement remained more or less non-partisan with Anna himself refusing to share the platform with political parties. It was an agitation against endemic corruption beyond any kind of partisan affiliation. The second phase of the movement, however, shed off its non-partisan character. Many political parties came up to share Team Anna's stage in support of the Lokpal cause. In fact, the debate around the Lokpal Bill in the winter session of Parliament (December 2011) saw almost all the political parties going against the Congress government's stand. Questions were raised regarding the sovereignty and credibility of fixed democratic institutions like Parliament. However, the critical defining element in India being its representative and institutionalised democracy, participation without reference to these institutions is still not widely accepted. Thus, in response to Team Anna's threat of a fresh agitation if effective anti-corruption machinery is not created, almost all the political leaders, cutting across ideologies, claimed that Parliament, being supreme, must be allowed to act as per its wisdom. Though, this claim of Parliament's supremacy in India has already been shrouded in questions and debates. Beyond doubt, Anna Hazare's relentless struggle for a strong Lokpal as an antidote to corruption has been instrumental behind the questioning of the supremacy of the existing Constitutional forms of governance and to some extent, democracy as a whole.

*"The spontaneous and massive response to the campaign for an effective anti-corruption law is a coping mechanism to liberate the people from a deep-rooted cynicism about our parliamentarians"*

*who claim to have a monopoly of knowledge, wisdom and concern for the well-being of their constituencies. Our political leaders irrespective of their ideologies should do introspection and devise measures to restore people's faith in the system. Until that is done, the claim that Parliament is supreme will be a meaningless rhetoric.” (See Bhat, T.R. ‘Are our parliamentarians doing their job?’ (The Hindu, March 31, 2012)<sup>42</sup>*

However, following the Anna movement and the sharp disagreements between the government and civil society, the former has taken a very strict stand against the latter. This is revealed by the Prime Minister’s statement labelling NGOs working with foreign funds as anti-development. Interestingly, his remarks have created a wedge between the government and civil society, while indicating that the country’s administration is itself split on key issues. It seems that one arm of the government is receptive to dissenting views from the NGOs, when many activists are themselves part of the National Advisory Council... the other arm, now represented by the Prime Minister, has been blaming the same set of organisations for stalling development.<sup>43</sup> Whatever may be the nature of the fissures within the government, the relationship between civil society and the government has become quite rancorous.

## **Conclusion**

The current study on ‘India against Corruption’ led by Anna Hazare proves that it is an upsurge relatively unique, distinctive and inimitable in nature. It has not only established deeper connections with the ordinary citizens, irrespective of the socio-economic backgrounds that they represent, but has also invigorated the myriad dynamics of relationships between the State on one hand and the civil and political societies on the other.

The aspect of ‘mass mobilisation’ drawn in by the movement seems unparalleled in the recent history of social movements in India. Broadly speaking, the Anna movement has two components: first is the core one, the urban and educated youth group commonly referred to as ‘Shining India’; second is a smaller and less assertive group constituted of the deprived sections of people who search for a platform to express their angst with the worsening conditions and sky-rocketing prices of essential commodities and problems of daily life. Simultaneously, Hazare’s ‘Team Anna’ comprises of diverse people, engaged with different social issues, including reforms in judiciary, bonded labour, communal amity etc., co-existing with grass-root level social activists working for social change. The movement largely symbolised an explosion by the Indian citizens against an inactive State suffering from acute inertia in addressing a burning social issue like corruption, promptly and stringently. In that respect, the Anna movement has been successful at catching the imagination of a large section of people on one level. In fact, the methodologies adopted by the Anna Team like Twitter updates, SMS campaigns, candle light vigils and media management – all have successfully blazed the idealism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century India’s conscious and informed masses, especially the middle classes (Sitapati, 2011, pp.39) Hardly any movement in the recent past has been able to attract the masses to such a great extent.

On the other hand, the movement has brought to the forefront the ambivalence, confusion, retaliation and confrontation that exist between the State and political society. There was a visible rift between the State and political parties on the Lokpal Bill. The winter session of the Parliament in December 2011, witnessed almost all the political parties going against the government’s Lokpal Bill. Confusion between the two persisted to such an extent that Parliamentary debates even raised

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<sup>42</sup> Internet Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/open-page/article3266652.ece>

<sup>43</sup> Business Standard, <http://www.business-standard.com/india/news/pm%5Cs-statementforeign-hands-unites-ngos-divides-govt/465974/>

questions regarding the effectiveness and supremacy of the Parliament comprising of people's elected representatives as against the citizens themselves. The movement also opened a new debate so far as the functioning of representative democracy is considered – whether political participation beyond the above mentioned fixed institutional/ Constitutional forms like Parliament will be more effective in India – parliamentary democracy vs. democratic society? Above all, it was during this phase that Team Anna for the first time, since the inception of the movement, shared the stage with political parties, most of which came out in support of Anna.

The conflicting stands and disconnects among the various forces within civil society was also reflected around the developments that the Anna upsurge had generated. Reputed social activists like Medha Patkar supported the Anna upsurge unambiguously. Empathy for the movement was also seen amongst other activists who are earnestly committed to the issues of human rights. Some like Shabnam Hashmi, Arundhati Roy and others have come out extremely critical of this movement. Aruna Roy's group has come out with an alternative draft for the Lokpal Bill. The dilemma for the activists probably was whether to be a part of the Anna uprising and fight for getting his draft of the Jan Lokpal Bill accepted or to stand in isolation away from this movement. Similar dilemmas could also be seen in the formal CSOs many of which have maintained a conscious institutional disconnect from the movement, even though many a times the leaders and representatives of these CSOs might have felt connected to the movement personally. Institutionally many of these CSOs could not shed off their reticence and associate themselves wholeheartedly with such a spontaneous citizen's eruption.

Finally, it is worth mentioning here that the Anna movement could be converted into a spectacular phenomenon in no time because of the huge over blow by the media. Constant live coverage and the extreme hype created sensationalised the whole process. Most television/ radio anchors have been found yelling and spurring the common masses to come out in support and even to be a part of the upsurge, thereby drastically increasing the speed of the mass awareness.

The single point agenda of Anna's movement is to eradicate the widespread corruption from Indian democracy and society as a whole. It is true that more than one draft of the Lokpal Bill made by various other civil society activists have been cruising around; but it is only Team Anna's incessant efforts that Anna' Hazare's version of the Bill has successfully been able to spawn a mass crusade engendering a mammoth uproar within and outside the geographical precincts of India. Probably, the biggest success of Team Anna's 'India against Corruption' movement is that it has been able to keep the protracted issue of 'corruption' alive and has relocated it candidly under the public limelight!

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