

## Political Corruption - How to Fight it

By Parameswar

Our system provides for political corruption the following way.

- 1) Remuneration given to elected representatives and even ministers is negligible compared to the costs they have to meet by way of election campaigning, entertaining guests, taking out tours etc. To meet the expenditures one has to find a way out. That also leads to corruption given the fact that his remuneration is negligible and there is no mechanism to provide uninterrupted flow of funds for one to spend other than party funds which are mostly based on extortion.
- 2) Though the system in principle provides for honest citizens to contest, it does not provide for flow of finances to meet all such expenditures. Hence it has become a profession only for affluent who can wield enough clout to extract such funds from society by foul means which is termed as 'political corruption'.

We must account for such expenditure which is inevitable before embarking on cornering a politician for his corrupt deeds.

The problem can be fixed rudimentarily in two ways.

- 1) By providing a high remuneration in proportion to what he has spent to come to elected office and what would be needed to carry out his business without depending on the mercy of a God Father of his party.
- 2) Or to design a mechanism to enable him gather such funds lawfully.

Proposal in point no.1 above will fail as it does not account for expenses of a candidate defeated in election as it pays only those elected. Given the fact that no body can be sure of getting elected, even in the event of an elected representative getting a good remuneration like 5 lacs per annum for example for a Minister, all the contestants who spent several lacs and do not gain such huge amounts in return will only attempt to recover costs by various unlawful means.

There is no doubt remuneration for elected representative must be enhanced at least to the tune of his nearest comparable civil service official. But it is reasonable to design a system where one does not depend on such huge earnings by way of salary alone. There were successful leaders who took a nominal fee of only one rupee even though for political stunt and ran the show. That means he is still able to discharge all functions simply by party funds, the legitimacy of which is always a question being a product of political corruption that has to be 'treated'. A leader should be able to gather similar amount of funds by way of campaign financing or party donations on his party's name or his own means without resorting to corruption while in office and without resorting to extortion before attempting for the office. Hence apart from voluntary donations subject to a limit it can be contemplated to gather such funds under law by way of Legalizing Lottery earnings for elections which can be designed according to principles underlaid here in point no.3.

First of all let us not be carried away by the sentiment of lottery vis-a-vis gambling. The lottery here is designed to serve a noble purpose to serve the function of corruption free elections in a large democracy like ours. It is a necessary evil, if at all it is one, and better than current vicious cycle of political corruption. When people understand the purpose, they

will cooperate. Rather they will participate enthusiastically . As it is once in an election term, not an every month affair, it can be safely presumed that poor man does not squander all his hard earned money for such lottery which is also one valid apprehension.

Basically the philosophy for lottery financed campaign funding is fueled by following argument : In the conventional system now, as an individual citizen , I get irked if am demanded or asked for party fund. If I am a businessman, I would not donate 50,000 Rs to a party with a smile in heart unless I expect an out of way favour ! But with lotteries, with full knowledge about the purpose I may prefer to spend 30 Rs and buy all three different party lottery tickets and read their agenda printed on it ! Parties may also chose to mention on each lottery ticket that this percentage of the ticket money goes to so and so 'Charity' or a 'Noble' cause, depending on their choice and taste . This adds dignity to the entire operation and relieves any gambling stigma !. All figures will be in media each time including the amount received by charity recipients. This also entails in healthy competition for good deeds and Candidates can spend with out a doubt about black money white money etc. It also promotes inner party democracy because cadre doesn't depend any more on Godfathers' pockets .

### **3) Modus Operandi of Lottery financing for election (a general overview) :**

Each candidate will be allowed to float a lottery under party's name or his election symbol if he is independent, subject to a lottery amount of not more than for example 15 lacs for parliamentary constituency , not more than for example 5 lacs for an assembly constituency.

---It is always a 'Candidate Centered lottery' meant for election funds and 'his' career expenses. He should not depend in principle on party funds alone for all his functions. Once it is legalized, such lotteries are subject normal auditing.

---Presuming that a representative needs atleast 5 lacs per annum in his term to function in his elected post with ease, and spends about 5 lacs for campaigning alone, all together he should be allowed to gather 6 times the lottery amount to be kept for himself when the lottery amount is 5 lacs in assembly campaign . This ceiling is to ensure out of way greed on part of public or the politician .(Figures are speculative. But the principle is important here).

---- **To avoid the person becoming greedy and keep all the funds to him self and all possible crimes, it can be contemplated to be kept under common account under statutory audit, a joint account held by Govt authority and the candidate with with-drawing authority only for candidate (politician here) subject to such "conditions" that only a certain percentage has to be spent per month, after getting elected , and whether spent or not, the fund shall be routed to PM disaster relief fund or some thing similar after "every year" automatically, but in no case shall that facilitate him to encash as future reserves for his personal accounts !**

---- To facilitate some degree of freedom, donation funds subject to a limit can still be allowed , which are under control of his party treasury, but lottery funds shall be separately subjected to such control described in above point .

----Donations may not reflect in individual's lottery collection, they are subject to current rules and regulations but lottery earnings are.

----A party can float a lottery for its candidate but party shall not be allowed to take out state wide lottery on large scale, seducing public for very huge funds like crores !.It should always be Candidate-Centered whether he wins or not.

---**A winning candidate** shall spend every month out of such funds every year before the funds go lapsed and go in to PM relief fund.**His spending shall be always by way of giving checks for donations whether it is to various youth organisations or associations and shall always be by way of check and receipt which determines limited freedom for him to siphon all the money in to his pocket.**But at the same time considerable leverage can be provided for petty cash expenses just like one sees such leverage in case of a senior Govt Official or a corporate executive while on tour , instead of picking on each and every 100 Rs bill. This entails in controlling and at the same time not suffocating the leader. And the expenses are always posted in press or similar publicized forum, may be internet, allowing a cushion of 10,000 Rs for example for trivial expenses.The most important point of entire mechanism is that the figures will be open to public through press and internet , in order to avoid an apprehension in public mind that this is yet another means devised by some body to stuff politicians' pockets. Ofcourse a pilot project is a must to openly evaluate the out come of such experiment and publicize all the results .

---**A losing candidate** shall claim all his election expenses from the lottery funds by showing election expenses to Govt official as well as to public through press or some such open forum . This again can hold some leverages to petty cash expenses which need not show receipts.As it is open to press, even though it is not an important news item, the very fact that press shall be inpicture ensures there is no fraud either from Govt Official involved who sanctions it or the leader who lost the seat . All this ofcourse after giving the lottery amount to lottery winner . These funds are always reimbursing type, so that the leader always spends in a calculative way based on sale of tickets.

--- A lottery ticket can claim certain percentage of funds flow to certain charities or good causes, may be boast the moral image of leader or that of lottery it self.

--- To eliminate too many Independent candidates coming in to fore in view of this facility, they can be limited to few candidates on first come first served basis, to the capacity of ballot paper stipulated by election commission .Ofcourse all major political parties will be allowed to take out their candidate centered lottery subject to all these stipulations.

---The entire process shall be publicised so that people will get to know how funds are gathered and spent before and after election .

---Lottery ticket price can be about 5 Rs or 10 Rs and their number to be printed shall be based on taking in to consideration other related figures - population, howmany times the amount goes to candidate account etc .

---Number of tickets printed also shall be determined based on such figures.The very fact that the way funds are spent is publicized before and after election, even during the tenure of leader holding the office will enthuse public to take part in it actively.Of course it is lottery. Election Lottery ! Common knowledge prompts me to think every body will participate ! I repeat, as it comes once in few years, this system is not going to rob the poor man of his hard earned money, atleast not more than current other lotteries and cheap arrack. For middle class, it is just a movie ticket to buy all five or six lottery tickets !

---In the event of death of a Candidate before election , the funds shall be directed to PM relief fund after paying lottery prize to winner, and reimbursing the expenditure till date, to the nearest kin of candidate who has been his nominee just like in a bank account. In case of a winning candidate's death, all the balance funds should go to PM relief fund(He already got his election expenses reimbursed).

Actual Lottery figures and modalities can best be formalised by those at the helm of affairs once it is agreed in principle . Too heavy prize amount shall not be allowed to avoid too much greed on part of buyer or candidate for election .

Looking from a voter's perspective, as voter I will be happy to see that a part of my money goes to a noble cause like red cross, cry, armed forces relief fund any thing that is in the ticket even if I do not win the lottery (if it is envisaged).

4) Apart from lottery earnings it can also be envisaged to collect funds through organising food camps where mirchi, singada, chats will be sold by party volunteers for fund collection, and system should facilitate such funds also to be pointed to same election fund governing lottery funds stipulated in point no.3 if the candidate chooses so. Again all figures open. This will sanctify the entire election funding mechanism.

Despite all this one can say a politician can still be corrupt. But that is for our conventional systems like Lok Ayukta to take care of. The attempt here is only to 'remove' gray areas of politicians commonly known expenses for which there has been no answer than bribery ,extortion, and goondaism.

The only alternative to this appears to me is

- Current system as it is which is ridden in vicious cycle of political corruption .
- Pure voluntary participation of business groups with out any pressure and pure sacrifice of leaders coming to serve country, and pure Volunteers as cadets who want to spend their time and energies for their leaders during campaign, all of which seems too unrealistic.

Finally to repeat, an elected representative's salary or remuneration also should be enhanced to the tune of atleast he draws equal to his parallel Civil Service Official till his term. That income is his income subject to normal taxing, but is not subjected to thorough scrutiny as against campaign lottery funds thus earned from point 3&4.