



Language

A significant popular movement against corporate and government corruption was ignited on 5 April 2011, when Anna Hazare, a 73 year-old former soldier, and campaigner against corruption in Maharashtra state since 1991, embarked on a 'fast to death' to secure a national ombudsman to fight corruption. His action mobilized many thousands of supporters in different cities, who flocked to the streets, undertook candlelit processions or fasted in sympathy. The Congress-led government, which was embroiled in a 24 billion pound telecoms fraud and allegations about bribery over the 2010 Commonwealth Games, hastened to respond. After the Prime Minister promised to bring a bill into the Lower House of Parliament, Hazare called off his fast on 9 April, but set a deadline for 15 August for bringing the bill into parliament. The government brought in an anti-corruption ombudsman bill which Hazare and his supporters argued was wholly inadequate; Hazare demanded that the draft drawn up by his advisers should be put before parliament instead. In order to prevent a further public hunger strike, the government on 16 August 2011 imprisoned Hazare in Delhi's Tihar jail and arrested hundreds of his supporters. Hazare began his fast in jail, whilst supporters protested across India. The government rapidly ordered his release, but Hazare refused bail until allowed to fast in public, which he did until 28th August, when parliament passed a 'sense of the house' resolution endorsing his demands, and thousands celebrated a 'people's victory'.

The government brought in a bill which passed in the lower house in late December 2011, but in the view of Hazare and his supporters it did not give the ombudsman sufficient powers, such as the right to prosecute offenders, and he embarked on another fast on 27 December, but on doctors' advice ended it three days later. The proposed ombudsman was not finally voted into law until two years later, when the lower house approved amendments to the original bill endorsed by the upper house. Anna Hazare, who had been undertaking another fast, ended it and announced the setting up of 'watchdog bodies' to monitor how the new law was enforced. The creation of the national ombudsman was the culmination of eight previous unsuccessful attempts to set up such a body since the 1960s. However, some leftists critics of Hazare's campaign argued a national body would be unwieldy and was contrary to the Gandhian approach he claimed to adopt.

Hazare began his national campaign by a statue of Gandhi and used the tactics of fasts and disobedience, and comparisons with Gandhi were promoted by his supporters and the media. One strand in negative comments on his campaign has queried the validity of this comparison. But the major criticisms on the left have been that the campaign was predominantly middle class and not focused on issues facing the poor, and that Hazare leaned towards the Hindu right, who were represented among his campaign team. Coverage of his movement did tend to be more favourable in Hindu language media, and the rightwing Hindu party the BJP supported his anti-corruption demands, in part to embarrass the Congress-led government. However, others have argued that the significance of the movement Hazare helped to mobilize should not be ignored. Indeed, a newly-created anti-corruption party the Aam Aadmi (Common Man) Party (AAP), formed by a former Gandhian activist and key associate of Hazare, Arvind Kejriwal, received spectacular support in elections to the Delhi assembly in December 2013. Kejriwal resigned as Delhi's chief minister 49 days later with his colleagues because, he claimed, the two major parties (Congress and the BJP) had blocked his anti-corruption measures. Hazare has, however, refused to support the AAP, citing his distrust of party politics.

The 2011-13 movement has been quite well covered in the international media, especially during the fasts and protests in April, August and December 2011, and some reports in Indian newspapers, such as the [Times of India](#) [1], are available online. Substantial journal articles and commentaries are so far more sparse.

Baisakh, Pradeep, [We will give people a political alternative: an interview with Arvind Kejriwal](#) [2], OpenDemocracy.net, 08/03/2013,

Jayaram, N., [Frenzied argument in India](#) [3], OpenDemocracy.net, 29/08/2011,



Article written at peak of Hazare movement, noting the divided views on the movement and criticisms of it, including the dangers of 'messianic campaigns' for parliamentary democracy.

Mishra, K.P., [Gandhian Views on Democracy](#) [4], Gandhi Marg, Vol. 34, issue 2-3 (Jul-Dec), 2012, pp. 205-216

Primarily an exposition of Gandhi's theory of democracy, but commenting on Hazare's anti-corruption movement as a starting point.

Nigam, Aditya ; Menon, Nivedita, [Anti-Corruption Movement and the Left](#) [5], Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 46, issue 37, 10/09/2011, pp. -4

Comments on the potential of a large and nonviolent movement and criticizes hard line leftist criticisms.

Patnaik, Prabhat, [Anna Hazare and Gandhi - Whatever devalues Parliament strikes at the root of democracy](#) [6], The Telegraph, Calcutta, 21/06/2011,

Criticizes coercive nature of a 'fast to the death' and dangers of civil society activism that bypasses parliament.

Sengupta, Mitu, [Anna Hazare and the Idea of Gandhi](#) [7], Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. 71, issue 3 (Aug), 2012, pp. 595-601

Originally published in *Dissent*.

Raises caveats about comparisons with Gandhi, discusses Hazare's diagnosis and prescriptions for corruption and comments on the nature of the Hazare movement. Argues against claims that it is a pawn of the extreme right RSS and/or CIA, noting the extent of mass protests and the depth of anger about corruption.

Shabnoor, Sultana, [Dig Deep into Corruption in India](#) [8], OpenDemocracy.net, 24/08/2011,

Brief summary of key disagreements between government and Hazare camp on role and powers of proposed ombudsman.

See also:

Raj C. Kumar, [Corruption and Human Rights in India: Comparative Perspectives on Transparency and Good Governance](#) [9], ([H.2.a. Analysing Corruption in Indian Politics and Civil Society Responses](#) [10]), postscript.

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[1] <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/> [2] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2013/we-will-give-people-political-alternative-interview-arvind-kejriwal> [3] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2011/frenzied-argument-india> [4] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2012/gandhian-views-democracy> [5] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2011/anti-corruption-movement-and-left> [6] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2011/anna-hazare-and-gandhi-whatever-devalues-parliament-strikes-root-democracy> [7] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2012/anna-hazare-and-idea-gandhi> [8] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2011/dig-deep-corruption-india> [9] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2011/corruption-and-human-rights-india-comparative-perspectives-transparency-and-good>



[10] <https://civilresistance.info/taxonomy/term/275>