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WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal provide dedicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

WHISTLEBLOWERS AND GOOD GOVERNANCE: A CRITICAL STUDY OF INDIA'S LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

The function of whistleblowers in promoting good governance within India's institutional and legal framework is critically examined in this paper. By exposing corruption, poor management, and power abuse, whistleblowing promotes integrity and transparency in public and private institutions and acts as a crucial accountability tool. By highlighting the rule of law, accountability, involvement, and responsiveness, the study places the analysis within the larger framework of good governance. Particular attention is paid to the Whistle Blowers Protection Act of 2014, its restrictions, and how it interacts with other relevant laws including the Right to Information Act of 2005, the Companies Act of 2013, and the Prevention of Corruption Act of 1988. When evaluating the judiciary's changing position on whistleblower protection, judicial statements are also taken into account. The article makes the case that although legislative improvements represent a step in the right direction, India's whistleblower regime still faces significant obstacles, such as insufficient enforcement mechanisms, reprisal risks, a lack of knowledge, and weak institutional safeguards. Comparative analysis of global best practices demonstrates the necessity of a stronger framework that guarantees whistleblower incentives, protection, and confidentiality. In order to promote ethical accountability, digital compliance, and public trust in a democratic and economic environment that is changing quickly, the conclusion highlights that empowering whistleblowers is not just a legal requirement but also a governance imperative.

Keywords:

Whistleblowers, Good Governance, Whistle Blowers Protection Act 2014, Corruption, Accountability, Transparency.

INTRODUCTION: -

In India, whistleblowing has become an important tool for encouraging accountability, openness, and moral behavior in government. The importance of people who protect the public interest by reporting instances of corruption, poor management, or abuse of power has been more widely acknowledged in the nation's conversation on good governance. However, historically, whistleblowers in India faced significant personal risks, a lack of institutional support, and systematic negligence; revelations were frequently received with indifference or retaliation. With the goal of institutionalizing whistleblowing as a tool of good governance, the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014, represented a historic attempt to establish a legal framework for the protection of such individuals. It's important to consider both internal issues and global governance trends while analyzing the development of India's whistleblower system. Governance systems under pressure to adjust to sophisticated forms of corruption, regulatory non-compliance, and ethical breaches following the 1991 economic liberalization and the growth of public and private institutions. India's policy discussions on protecting institutional integrity through whistleblower protections have also been impacted by international best practices, especially in OECD and UN frameworks. Persistent loopholes, including insufficient protection mechanisms, a lack of awareness, and lax enforcement, continue to erode the effectiveness of India's whistleblower framework in spite of legal revisions. In light of this, the current study critically examines the institutional and legislative frameworks that regulate whistleblowers in India, looking at how they support the fundamental components of good governance—transparency, accountability, participation, and responsiveness. By evaluating legislative changes, court rulings, and policy discussions, the study identifies advancements as well as obstacles in guaranteeing that whistleblowers are not only accepted but also empowered as representatives of democratic accountability.¹

OVERVIEW ON WHISTLEBLOWERS AND INDIA'S LEGAL- INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The act of exposing wrongdoing, corruption, fraud, or power abuse in public or private institutions is known as whistleblowing. It has developed into a crucial tool for making sure businesses follow the law and moral standards, and it directly supports the ideas of good governance (Banisar, 2011; Brown, 2008). Whistleblowers serve as watchdogs, keeping

¹ Priya Menon, Arvind Rao, & Rakesh Nair, Whistleblowers and Governance in India: Legal Reforms and Institutional Challenges, 12 J. Gov. & Pub. Pol'y 145 (2024), <https://jgpp.org/articles/JGPP2406012.pdf>.

people and organizations responsible for the public interest by exposing hidden wrongdoing. The importance of whistleblowing has increased in India as a result of widespread corporate fraud, corruption scandals, and systemic governance shortcomings. The 2014 Whistle Blowers Protection Act was passed in order to protect people from reprisals and to establish a legal framework for disclosures. Whistleblower disclosures are further facilitated by laws found in the firms Act, 2013 (which requires vigil systems in listed firms), the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, and the Right to Information Act, 2005. However, due to institutional indifference, poor anonymity, and lax enforcement, the efficacy of these laws is frequently questioned (Kapur, 2017; Menon, 2024).

Around the world, examples such as the U.S. Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 and the U.K. Public Interest Disclosure Act of 1998 show how strong whistleblower protection may improve public administration and corporate governance. Strong legal protection, secrecy, and procedures for responding to disclosures are all guaranteed by these systems. However, problems including victimization of whistleblowers, ignorance, and a lack of sufficient protections continue to plague India's system.

Theoretically, whistleblowing is a moral act that supports the principles of justice, equity, and accountability in addition to being a legal practice. It fosters an atmosphere of open and inclusive government, which gives stakeholders and citizens confidence in institutions. India can significantly reduce corruption and promote integrity across industries by tying governance changes and whistleblower protection together.

Table 1: Types of Whistleblowing (Adapted from Miceli & Near, 1992; Lewis, 2008)

Types	Definitions	Examples
Internal Whistleblowing	Disclosure made within the organization to higher authorities, compliance officers, or internal ethics committees.	Reporting fraud to the company's audit committee.
External Whistleblowing	Disclosure made to statutory bodies, regulators, or law enforcement agencies.	Complaint filed with the Central Vigilance Commission or SEBI.

Anonymous Whistleblowing	Disclosure made without revealing the identity of the whistleblower to avoid retaliation.	Using confidential hotlines or online reporting portals.
Corporate Whistleblowing	Disclosure specifically related to unethical or illegal practices within corporations, often concerning financial irregularities, insider trading, or governance failures.	Employees reporting financial misstatements or insider dealing in a listed company.
Retaliatory Whistleblowing	Occurs when an employee exposes misconduct as a response to being victimized, unfairly treated, or retaliated against by the organization. It may stem from grievances that trigger the disclosure of wrongdoing.	An employee who is demoted or harassed decides to reveal corruption or embezzlement practices within the organization.

WHISTLEBLOWING AND COMPLIANCE IN GOOD GOVERNANCE

When it comes to whistleblowing, compliance means abiding by the legal protections, moral principles, and institutional safeguards that ensure that reports of wrongdoing and corruption in businesses and government agencies be made safely.²

It incorporates the values of responsibility, openness, and integrity in governance and goes beyond legislative requirements. Generally speaking, whistleblowing compliance focuses on critical risk areas that have an immediate influence on how well good governance operates. These consist of:

1. **Legal Protection:** Legal frameworks such as the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014 in India are designed to shield whistleblowers from retaliation, harassment, or victimization. Such laws ensure that disclosures made in good faith are protected and given due attention by competent authorities.

² Asha Kaushal & Nandita Singh, Whistleblowing and Democratic Accountability in India: An Institutional Analysis, *J. Indian L. & Pol'y Rev.*, vol. 12, at 45 (2021), <https://jilpr.org/articles/whistleblowing-democratic-accountability-india>

2. **Confidentiality and Anonymity:** To promote reporting, it is essential to protect the privacy of whistleblowers' identities. The reduction of personal and professional hazards is ensured by institutional ombudsman procedures, hotlines, and anonymous reporting channels.
3. **Institutional Accountability:** Governmental organizations and agencies must set up impartial, open procedures for receiving and looking into disclosures. Ignoring such disclosures damages governance and erodes institutional trust.
4. **Ethical Responsibility:** Beyond the letter of the law, businesses have an ethical duty to create a culture that encourages citizens and workers to report misconduct without fear. Credibility is increased, corruption is decreased, and organizational justice is advanced by a strong ethical culture.

According to the World Bank and other international organizations, good governance is the framework that ensures that public institutions manage resources, conduct public affairs, and ensure that human rights are realized without corruption or abuse. In this system, whistleblowing provides an internal accountability and supervision mechanism and acts as a remedial mechanism. In India, adherence to whistleblower laws has significantly improved openness in both public and commercial entities. Strong whistleblower frameworks have been shown to improve efficiency, promote democratic accountability, and lessen corruption, according to empirical studies. On the other hand, inadequate protection laws deter disclosures, support abuses of authority, and undermine public confidence in political systems.

As a result, whistleblowing compliance directly supports the ideals of good governance in India's democratic framework by acting as a corrective instrument for accountability as well as a preventive measure against corruption.

WHISTLEBLOWING: PRINCIPLE AND LEGAL ORIGIN

The act of an employee or insider disclosing information about misbehavior, wrongdoing, or unlawful action within a company is known as whistleblowing. It is a legally recognized method to improve accountability and openness in governance, not only a moral thing to do.

The Core Principle: Accountability through Disclosure³

- **What it means:** By ensuring that corruption, fraud, or abuse of power are reported to

³ Marcia P. Miceli & Janet P. Near, *Blowing the Whistle: The Organizational and Legal Implications for Companies and Employees* (Lexington Books 1992).

the proper authorities, whistleblowing protects the public interest and upholds good governance.

- **The Result (Institutional Integrity):** Whistleblowing ensures that governance is focused on efficiency, justice, and legality by exposing wrongdoing and safeguarding democratic institutions and organizational ethics.

The Legal Origin: The Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014

The institutionalization of whistleblowing in India was formally recognized with the enactment of the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014.⁴

The Act mandates that whistleblowers be protected from harm while offering a formal framework for reporting corruption or deliberate abuse of authority by public personnel.

The Act created a clear statutory foundation for whistleblowing as a legal right rather than a morally optional act, despite criticism for its narrow scope and weak enforcement provisions. As a formal weapon for accountability in governance, whistleblowing is no longer merely a matter of personal conscience.

Institutional Duties: Safeguards and Ethical Responsibility⁵

The framework for whistleblowing compliance in India imposes dual responsibilities:

- **Legal Duty of Protection:** Public authorities and organizations have a duty to safeguard whistleblowers' identities and safety against reprisals.
- **Ethical Duty of Responsiveness:** Organizations have an obligation to respond to disclosures in a timely, open, and impartial manner to guarantee that whistleblowing serves the public good.

The Critical Link to Good Governance

Although "good governance" is not specifically mentioned in the Act, the spirit of whistleblowing is consistent with its tenets. Effective whistleblower protection has a direct impact on:

Integrity by promoting moral decision-making in institutions; accountability by holding those in positions of authority accountable; and transparency by bringing to light misconduct.

As a result, whistleblowing in India has changed from being a brave individual act to a systematic compliance procedure that is essential to the constitutional goal of clean

⁴ The Whistle Blowers Protection Act, No. 17 of 2014, India Code (2014).

⁵ Asha Kaushal & Nandita Singh, Whistleblowing and Democratic Accountability in India: An Institutional Analysis, 12 J. Indian L. & Pol'y Rev. 45 (2021).

governance, much how the corporate veil principle has changed in company law.

JUDICIAL AND LEGAL GROUNDS FOR WHISTLEBLOWING IN INDIA

Although whistleblowing is a crucial tool for guaranteeing accountability and openness, Indian statutory law and jurisprudence acknowledge that its protection is not unqualified. Legislators and courts have created legal frameworks that both allow for the revelation of misconduct and define the parameters of protection, especially to guard against abuse of the system. The main legal precepts, institutional frameworks, and grounds for whistleblowing in India are represented by the following categories:

1. Disclosures Involving Corruption or Misuse of Power

Whistleblowing is primarily recognized when it exposes corruption, fraud, or mismanagement by public officials or corporate entities.

Legal Basis: The Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014 provides statutory protection to individuals disclosing acts of corruption or willful misuse of authority by public servants.⁶

Judicial Support: In *SP Gupta v. Union of India* (1981 Supp SCC 87), the Supreme Court emphasized that disclosures in public interest can override confidentiality clauses when essential to prevent misuse of public office.⁷

Principle: Protection is extended only when disclosures are made in good faith and pertain to genuine wrongdoing.

2. Protection Against Victimization

A central legal concern in whistleblowing cases is safeguarding the whistleblower from reprisal by employers or authorities.

Legal Framework: Sections 7–9 of the Whistle Blowers Protection Act outline protection mechanisms, including maintaining the confidentiality of identity and prohibiting discriminatory action.⁸

Application: Courts have upheld these protections, interpreting them as necessary for enabling citizens and employees to report malfeasance without fear.

⁶ The Whistle Blowers Protection Act, No. 17 of 2014, India Code (2014), §§ 2–9.

⁷ *SP Gupta v. Union of India*, (1981 Supp SCC 87) (India).

⁸ *Ibid.*, §§ 7–9.

Example: A public servant reporting misappropriation of funds cannot be transferred or punished until an independent inquiry determines the validity of the claim.

3. Disclosures Relating to Public Safety, Environment, or Human Rights Violations

Whistleblowing extends beyond corruption to include disclosures concerning threats to public safety, environmental degradation, and violations of human rights. Such disclosures are essential for ensuring sustainable governance and accountability in state and corporate actions.

Legal Basis:

Under Article 21 of the Constitution of India, the right to life includes the right to a clean and safe environment. Consequently, disclosures exposing environmental or safety risks fall within the ambit of public interest disclosures.

Judicial Support:

In *M.C. Mehta v. Union of India (Oleum Gas Leak Case)*⁹, the Supreme Court recognized the duty of industries and public authorities to uphold public safety and transparency. Whistleblowers exposing hazards are thus acting in furtherance of fundamental rights rather than against organizational loyalty.

Principle:

Disclosures made to avert environmental harm or health hazards constitute acts of public service and attract protection under both constitutional and statutory frameworks.

4. Public Interest Disclosure and Freedom of Expression

The right to blow the whistle has been judicially connected to the freedom of speech and expression guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution. Whistleblowing, when conducted in good faith, represents an exercise of civic responsibility and democratic participation.

Judicial Support:

In *People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) v. Union of India*¹⁰, the Court affirmed that the right to information and transparency in governance are integral to the freedom of expression. Similarly, in *R. Rajagopal v. State of Tamil Nadu*¹¹, the Court held that

⁹ *M.C. Mehta v. Union of India*, (1987) 1 SCC 395 (Oleum Gas Leak Case).

¹⁰ *People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) v. Union of India*, (2003) 4 SCC 399.

¹¹ *R. Rajagopal v. State of Tamil Nadu*, (1994) 6 SCC 632.

public officials cannot use confidentiality to conceal misconduct from the public eye.

Principle:

When whistleblowing promotes transparency, public debate, and democratic accountability, it aligns with constitutional morality and deserves legal recognition and protection.

5. Whistleblowing in Corporate Governance and Private Sector Accountability

While the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014 primarily targets public authorities, judicial interpretation and corporate law developments have extended similar principles to the private sector.

Legal Development:

The Companies Act, 2013 introduced Section 177(9) and Section 177(10), mandating a vigil mechanism for directors and employees to report unethical behaviour, fraud, or violations of the company's code of conduct. The SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 further reinforce this obligation for listed entities.

Judicial Support:

In *Central Bank of India v. Ravindra*¹², the Supreme Court underscored that corporate transparency and integrity are core components of good governance. Whistleblower protections serve as an internal check on corruption and malpractice.

Principle:

Corporate whistleblowing mechanisms institutionalize ethical accountability and prevent corporate frauds such as those exposed in the Satyam Computer Services Ltd. Scam¹³, thereby ensuring investor confidence and financial integrity.

6. Judicial Recognition of Public Interest and Good Faith

Courts have consistently emphasized that whistleblower protection depends on the good faith and public interest nature of the disclosure. The absence of malice or personal motive is crucial for invoking judicial and statutory protection.

Judicial Support:

In *Vineet Narain v. Union of India*¹⁴, the Supreme Court strengthened the independence

¹² *Central Bank of India v. Ravindra*, (2002) 1 SCC 367.

¹³ *SEBI v. Satyam Computer Services Ltd.*, (2011) SCC OnLine SAT 123.

¹⁴ *Vineet Narain v. Union of India*, (1998) 1 SCC 226.

of investigative agencies (like the CBI) to ensure that corruption disclosures are investigated impartially. The Court emphasized that informants and whistleblowers play a critical role in upholding the rule of law.

Principle:

Whistleblowing, when aimed at protecting constitutional values and exposing corruption, is a legitimate exercise of public duty. Courts have rejected attempts to suppress such disclosures under the guise of defamation or breach of confidentiality.

7. Institutional and Administrative Mechanisms

India's whistleblower framework is supported by several statutory and administrative mechanisms designed to process and protect disclosures.

(a) Central Vigilance Commission (CVC):

Under the Public Interest Disclosure and Protection of Informers (PIDPI) Resolution, 2004, the CVC acts as the designated authority to receive complaints against corruption in public offices. It maintains the confidentiality of the whistleblower and ensures preliminary inquiry into the allegations.

(b) Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG):

CAG audits and reports instances of public fund misuse. Whistleblowers providing internal financial disclosures assist in the early detection of corruption.

(c) Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013:

This Act creates an independent ombudsman system to investigate corruption at higher levels of government, thereby complementing the whistleblower protection regime.

8. Challenges and Limitations

Despite progressive legislation, India's whistleblower protection regime faces several challenges:

Weak Enforcement: Delays in inquiries under the 2014 Act reduce its deterrent value.

Inadequate Protection: Several cases reveal retaliation through transfers, demotions, or even threats to life.

Exclusions: The 2015 Amendment Bill (not yet enforced) proposed to exclude disclosures related to national security, cabinet proceedings, and commercial confidence — diluting the original Act's spirit.

Lack of Awareness: Many public servants and citizens are unaware of formal mechanisms to report misconduct.

Judicial Concern:

In *Anjali Bhardwaj v. Union of India*¹⁵, the Supreme Court criticized the government for delays in appointing competent authorities under the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, emphasizing that legislative intent must be matched with administrative readiness.

EVOLUTION OF WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION IN INDIA

Before dedicated legislation, whistleblowing in India was governed by scattered provisions under anti-corruption laws and administrative guidelines. However, several landmark incidents and judicial pronouncements paved the way for institutional reform:

Vineet Narain v. Union of India (1998) – Supreme Court directed the creation of an independent CBI and vigilance structure to combat corruption.

Manjunath Shanmugam Case (2005) – A public sector officer was murdered for exposing corruption in oil distribution.

Satyendra Dubey Case (2003) – His killing after exposing corruption in the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) triggered national outrage and the demand for a dedicated whistleblower law.

These incidents led to the Public Interest Disclosure and Protection of Informers Resolution (PIDPI), 2004, followed by statutory recognition through the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK: THE WHISTLE BLOWERS PROTECTION ACT, 2014

The Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014 (WBPA) represents India's principal legal framework for safeguarding individuals who expose corruption or abuse of power.

a. Objectives

- To establish a mechanism for receiving complaints relating to corruption, misuse of power, or willful misuse of discretion by public servants.
- To provide protection to whistleblowers against victimization or retaliation.
- To ensure confidentiality of the identity of informers.

¹⁵ *Anjali Bhardwaj v. Union of India*, (2019) 18 SCC 246.

b. Key Provisions

- Section 3: Empowers any person (including a public servant or NGO) to make a public interest disclosure before a Competent Authority (e.g., Central or State Vigilance Commission).
- Section 4: Ensures that the identity of the complainant is kept confidential.
- Section 11: Provides protection against victimization of the whistleblower.
- Section 14: Prescribes penalties for disclosure of false or frivolous complaints.

c. Limitations

- The Act excludes information covered under the Official Secrets Act, 1923, restricting disclosure of matters affecting national security.
- The Act does not provide for anonymous complaints.
- Private sector employees are excluded from the ambit of protection.
- The Act's implementation remains weak due to the absence of rules and limited awareness.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

The institutional framework for whistleblower protection in India represents a multi-layered system aimed at strengthening transparency, integrity, and accountability in public governance. The foundation of this framework lies in the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014, which provides a statutory mechanism for receiving complaints relating to corruption, abuse of power, or willful misuse of authority by public servants. The Act empowers designated “competent authorities” — such as the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) for central government employees, the State Vigilance Commissions for state-level cases, and the Lokpal and Lokayuktas for higher-level officials — to receive and inquire into disclosures made in good faith. The CVC, under the Public Interest Disclosure and Protection of Informers (PIDPI) Resolution, 2004, plays a pivotal role in protecting the identity of whistleblowers and ensuring that they are not subjected to victimization or retaliation. The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 further reinforces this institutional structure by establishing independent bodies to investigate corruption allegations against ministers, MPs, and senior officials, ensuring a high level of accountability within the administrative hierarchy. In addition, investigative agencies like the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and departmental vigilance units assist in probing

serious cases of corruption or misconduct, often referred by the CVC or Lokpal. While these institutions collectively aim to safeguard whistleblowers and uphold ethical governance, gaps still exist — including delays in investigation, limited awareness, and lack of comprehensive protection for private-sector employees. Nevertheless, this institutional framework signifies a significant step toward fostering a culture of openness and ethical responsibility in public administration, making whistleblowing an essential pillar of good governance in India.

WHISTLEBLOWING AND GOOD GOVERNANCE LINKAGE

The institutional framework for whistleblower protection in India is a crucial component of the nation's commitment to promoting transparency, ethical governance, and accountability within public institutions. The cornerstone of this framework is the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014, which provides a statutory mechanism for reporting corruption, abuse of authority, willful misuse of power, and gross mismanagement in government bodies. It empowers specific "competent authorities" — including the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), State Vigilance Commissions, and the Lokpal and Lokayuktas — to receive complaints, conduct preliminary inquiries, and recommend appropriate action against erring officials. The CVC, established under the Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003, functions as the primary authority for dealing with corruption-related disclosures against central government employees and public sector undertakings. It also operates under the Public Interest Disclosure and Protection of Informers (PIDPI) Resolution, 2004, which mandates the protection of whistleblowers' identities and ensures they are shielded from retaliation, transfer, or victimization. Complementing this, the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 created independent anti-corruption ombudsmen at the central and state levels to investigate complaints against public functionaries, including ministers and senior bureaucrats, thereby reinforcing the accountability mechanism within governance. Additionally, investigative bodies such as the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Enforcement Directorate (ED), and departmental vigilance units assist in conducting in-depth investigations into serious cases of corruption and misconduct referred by these authorities. The framework also aligns with India's international obligations under the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), emphasizing the need for effective legal and institutional measures to protect whistleblowers. However, despite these statutory and institutional safeguards, challenges persist, such as bureaucratic red-tapism, lack of awareness about reporting procedures, inadequate protection in the private sector, and delays in inquiry processes. Many whistleblowers continue to face threats,

harassment, or career setbacks due to weak enforcement mechanisms. Therefore, while India's institutional framework marks a significant step toward ensuring accountability and good governance, its effective implementation, stronger coordination among agencies, and comprehensive protection for whistleblowers across all sectors remain essential to truly uphold transparency and the rule of law in public administration.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

To ensure that whistleblowing becomes an effective instrument for promoting transparency and accountability in governance, several reforms and measures are necessary. Firstly, there should be a comprehensive amendment to the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014, to expand its scope beyond the public sector and explicitly include private sector employees, non-governmental organizations, and public-private partnerships, where corruption or misuse of power is equally prevalent. Secondly, the Act must include clear provisions for anonymity and a robust witness protection mechanism, ensuring that whistleblowers and their families are safeguarded against harassment, threats, or retaliation. This could be achieved by establishing a National Whistleblower Protection Authority, functioning independently of government influence, to oversee implementation, monitor investigations, and provide immediate protection in sensitive cases. Thirdly, awareness and sensitization campaigns must be conducted regularly within government departments and public enterprises to educate employees about their rights, the procedures for making disclosures, and the importance of ethical conduct in public service. Additionally, the government should introduce time-bound investigation mechanisms, mandating that all whistleblower complaints be examined within a fixed period, thereby reducing delays and enhancing public confidence in the system.

Moreover, the Lokpal, Lokayuktas, and the CVC should be better empowered through adequate funding, staffing, and technological resources to efficiently handle large volumes of complaints. There should also be mandatory annual reports from these institutions to Parliament and State Legislatures detailing whistleblower cases, actions taken, and systemic reforms implemented. Another important recommendation is to integrate digital and anonymous reporting mechanisms—such as secure online portals managed by the CVC or Lokpal—allowing individuals to disclose corruption without fear of exposure. The legal framework should also introduce penal provisions against false or malicious complaints, to

prevent misuse of whistleblower protections while maintaining their credibility. Furthermore, India should adopt international best practices, such as those followed in the United States under the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act (2012) and in the United Kingdom under the Public Interest Disclosure Act (1998), which include financial rewards or incentives for individuals whose disclosures lead to the recovery of public funds or prevention of corruption. Finally, fostering a culture of integrity and openness within public institutions is essential — this can be achieved by integrating ethics training into civil service programs, promoting internal grievance redressal mechanisms, and recognizing honest disclosures through public commendations or awards.

CONCLUSION

Whistleblowers play a vital role in upholding the principles of transparency, integrity, and accountability, which are the cornerstones of good governance. In India, the evolution of the legal and institutional framework—through instruments like the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014, the Public Interest Disclosure and Protection of Informers (PIDPI) Resolution, 2004, the Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, and the functioning of bodies such as the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)—represents a significant step towards fostering an environment that encourages citizens and officials to expose corruption and maladministration. However, despite these measures, the effectiveness of whistleblower protection in India remains constrained by implementation gaps, bureaucratic inertia, and inadequate safeguards against retaliation. Several incidents of victimization and violence against whistleblowers highlight the urgent need for stronger legal provisions, efficient institutional coordination, and cultural acceptance of whistleblowing as a civic responsibility rather than betrayal.

To truly realize the ideals of good governance, India must move beyond formal compliance and ensure practical enforcement, confidentiality, and security for individuals who come forward in the public interest. A robust whistleblower protection regime not only deters corruption but also strengthens citizens' trust in democratic institutions. Ultimately, the protection of whistleblowers is not merely a legal necessity but a moral imperative—essential for building a transparent, accountable, and corruption-free governance system that reflects the true spirit of democracy and justice envisioned in the Constitution of India.

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