

“Corruption has grown to alarming levels [in India]” – Prashant Bhushan

 blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2013/04/02/prashant-bhushan/

2013-4-2

Bodrul Chaudhury and Sanam Arora report on Prashant Bhushan's recent talk at LSE.

LSE's Department of Anthropology in collaboration with the National Indian Students Union UK welcomed Indian Supreme Court advocate Prashant Bhushan on 15 March 2013. Bhushan is a social activist who was instrumental in the anti-corruption movement in India in August 2011 and last year helped found the Aam Admi (Common Man's) Party with Arvind Kejriwal. He discussed the state of politics in India and options for checking widespread corruption.



Bhushan suggested that India is currently standing at a crossroads: if corruption continues unchecked, one way leads to anarchy; however, with greater transparency India could be on a path towards 'reclaiming democracy'. Speaking against two decades of privatisation, Bhushan argued that the wholesale transfer of capital resources and public assets to private corporations has contributed significantly towards the spread of corruption in India. "Corruption has grown to such alarming levels that it has created a 'mafia state'," he said. "The corporate mafia has its grip on virtually every aspect of administration and every part of the decision-making machinery in the country."

The advocate explained that this ubiquity of corruption provoked his decision to join Anna Hazare's anti-graft movement aimed at pressurising the Congress-led government to pass the Jan Lokpal Bill. The bill sought the establishment of an ombudsman to check the mammoth-scale political corruption that has been coming to light in India. Bhushan argued that the legislation would have led to the eradication of corruption and suggested that the government did not pass the bill because it would have resulted in many of its members landing in jail.

Bhushan also discussed his belief that the only way to instigate social and political change in India is to challenge current political parties at the ballot box. This conviction resulted in the creation of the Aam Admi Party, which was

founded by Kejriwal on 26 November 2012, without the support of Anna Hazare. Bhushan explained that the party is currently focused on winning the forthcoming assembly elections in Delhi in November 2013. If successful, the party will then plan to contest general elections scheduled to take place in 2014.

Critiquing current democratic practices in India, Bhushan argued that the government ignored the wishes of the majority of Indians, who wanted the Jan Lokpal Bill to be implemented, in order to avoid exposure. He also called for Indian democracy to be more participatory and decentralised. Without such changes, Bhushan asserted, the country could face a state of anarchy in the near future.

- Copyright © 2016 London School of Economics