

Unseen Burden on the Party

FDR Study : Political Party Workers



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Aim of the Survey

To understand the direct and indirect costs incurred by political parties in party maintenance in the inter-election period

Survey Sample Size

Constituency	Number of Party Workers Surveyed
Constituency I	17
Constituency II	20
Total Sample Size	37

Profile of the Respondents

- All levels of party workers were covered - grassroots level to leadership positions.
- 59% of the surveyed party workers were affiliated to the political party due to their loyalty towards the MLA.
- 67% of them were full time party workers, that is, they spent more than 45 hours per week on party work.

Nature of Work

Nature of work	Percentage of party workers involved in this work
Welfare Schemes (Pensions, Kalyana Lakshmi, CM Relief Fund, etc.)	62%
Police cases	48%
Municipality Office (Aadhar card, Ration card, etc.)	46%
Revenue Office	37%
Miscellaneous (Electricity, Water supply, etc)	59.4%
Contracts and Tenders	2.7%

Nature of Expenditure by party workers

- Party functions (anniversaries, founding day, flag hoisting etc.)
- Festival donations
- Political Party Meetings
- Banners and Flexes during MLA/party leader visits etc.
- Transport - vehicle diesel etc.
- Maintenance works (electrical, roads, plumbing etc.)

Public dependency on Party Workers

No. of people who approach the party worker in a week	Percentage of party workers
Up to 50	49%
50-100	11%
100-200	8%
Greater than 200	29%

Non-election Out-of-Pocket Expenditure by party work of Constituency I

Expenditure incurred per year	Percentage of party workers incurring this expenditure	Average yearly expenditure incurred
Less than Rs. 1,20,000	17.6% (3)	Rs. 2.7 lakh (at an avg of Rs. 90,000 per person/yr)
Rs. 1,20,000 - Rs. 3 lakh	5.8% (1)	Rs. 2.1 lakh (at an avg of Rs. 2.1 lakh per person/yr)
Rs. 3 lakh - 6 lakh	23.5% (4)	Rs. 16 lakhs (at an avg of Rs. 4 lakh per person/yr)
Above Rs. 6 lakh	52.9% (9)	Rs. 1.59 crore (at an avg of Rs. 17.7 lakh per person/yr)
Total	17	Rs. 2.23 crore

*Note: The out of pocket expenditure of party workers in this constituency seems to be unusually high; especially the 9 party workers spending Rs. 17.7 lakhs on an average.

Non-election Out-of-pocket Expenditure by Party Workers of Constituency II

Expenditure incurred per year	Percentage of party workers incurring this expenditure	Average yearly expenditure incurred
Upto Rs. 1,20,000	65%(13)	11.7 Lakh (at an average of Rs. 90,000 per person/yr)
Rs. 1,20,000- Rs. 3 Lakh	10% (2)	Rs.4.2 Lakh (at an average of Rs. 2.1 Lakh per person/yr)
Rs. 3 Lakh - 6 Lakh	10% (2)	Rs. 8 Lakh (at an average of Rs. 4 Lakh per person/yr)
Above 6 Lakh	0	-
NA	15% (3)	-
Total	20	Rs. 23.9 Lakh

Estimated Indirect Cost in an Assembly constituency during non-election period

- Each full-time workers needs Rs. 15,000 - 20,000 per month for his sustenance or Rs. 2 lakh - 2.5 lakh per year.
- 200 workers are bearing an indirect cost of Rs. 4 crore.

Estimated Cost of Party Machine in an Assembly constituency during non-election period

Average Cost incurred by 200-400 party workers (Direct cost)	Approx Rs. 50 lakh per year
Indirect Costs at Rs. 2 lakh/yr for 200 party workers	Rs. 4 crore per year
Total Cost incurred by 200-400 party workers (Direct + Indirect cost)	Rs. 4.5 crore per year*
Estimated cost incurred for a major party in all 119 constituencies of Telangana	Rs. 536 crore per year
Estimated cost incurred by a major party in 5 years	Rs. 2675 crore approx.
Total cost for all major parties	Rs. 6600 crore approx.

Explanation*

By assuming a figure of Rs. 20,000 to be given by the party to each worker for a month, we arrive at a number close to Rs. 2,50,000 being spent for the entire year (20,000 multiplied by 12 months and add 10,000 of indirect costs).

This multiplied by 200 (considering it as the average number of party workers in a constituency), it leads us to Rs. 5 crore (approx.) being spent.

Estimated Expenditure incurred during election period

Cost incurred by party workers during the election period (better off party workers)	Rs. 48.71 Lakh
Average cost incurred by the candidate of the major political party during the election period in one assembly constituency	Rs. 10 Cr
Estimated cost incurred (during elections) in 119 constituencies of Telangana for a major political party	Rs. 1250 Crore (10.5 Crore multiplied by 119 constituencies)
Total election cost for all major parties	Rs. 3000 crore

Conclusion

- Maintenance of political party workers is a huge unseen burden on political parties.
- Part of the cost of party activities is borne by the better off workers in return for influence and positions.
- Most of the cost is indirect in the form of time and energy of relatively poor workers.
- This is a burden imposed on the party as people need help to access basic government services.
- A party that cannot sustain a grassroots machine is not electorally viable.

Conclusion

- It leads to systemic corruption thereby resulting in governance and political crises in India.
- Robust public service delivery, decentralization of power and accountability of bureaucracy are key to reducing the burden on political parties.