



## Ethical Crossroads: Battle for Transparency in a Corrupt System

Ms. Shakti Singh is a senior Indian Administrative Services (IAS) officer who has been serving at this post for over 20 years. Recently, she was appointed as the district magistrate of a rural district in an eastern state of India which has been known to suffer from high poverty rates and lack of basic amenities like clean drinking water, electricity, and healthcare facilities.

After a few weeks of Ms Shakti transfer, some contractors were hired to construct a new healthcare facility in the district. However, she discovered that they have been cutting corners and using substandard materials. They were also found inflating the project costs and syphoning off a significant portion of the funds meant for the project.

If Ms. Shakti reports the matter to the higher authorities, she could face backlash from the contractors and their political connections. On the other hand, if she remains silent, the project will be completed with poor quality materials and at a much higher cost, and the people of the district will suffer.

In this context, Ms. Shakti has two choices, one - she could remain silent and allow the contractors to continue with the project as planned. This would avoid any immediate confrontation with the contractors or their political connections and two - she can report the matter to her superiors and ensure that the contractors are held accountable for their actions. This might, however, jeopardise her career and safety.

What factors should Ms. Shakti consider before making her decision?

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