

Good Governance in India – Some Specified Issues and Concerns (1980-2000)

Spiral Effects on Economic Development



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Abstract

Quest for an appropriate socio-political interactive system to be put in place for a nation-state is as old as the formation of the earliest among them. Interactions between man and his bio-physical and socio-cultural environment have shaped such systems at the fore of politics. For India the vision of independence had caught the imagination of its people as and when the atrocities of the imperial powers were thought to have crossed the tolerable limits. Independence got to be had. Forerunners, among the visionaries about an Independent India were Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi (Gandhiji). Gandhiji's vision of independent India was based on the governance led by democratic decentralization entailing power to Gram Panchayats and people at grass-root level. Turning times portrayed it as a matrix of relationship between political and administrative structure and society. While various stumbling blocks kept challenging, the system has been from time to time been trying to hoover the knolls and dells over the tortuous way to good governance. This paper regards itself to several challenges and various initiatives taken by Indian leaders to carve out a state run as an efficient economic democracy.

Keywords: Governance, Democracy, Corruption, Illiteracy, UID, RTI, Unemployment, E-Governance, Etc

Introduction

The concept of and creation of the state is one of the earliest debates in political science literature. From Plato to Amartya Sen, philosophers have tirelessly invested valuable effort to delineate the mysterious dimensions and instruments of the state. The philosophical foundations of the state and the rationale for its creation are not yet grounded in theory as they seem to be. Much of the Ice is in anticipation of "to be broken" more specifically concerning with the nature and scope of a just state. On the instruments of state what we know as of now is, "the synonymous nature of government and the state." The state is erroneously, for all practical purposes represented by the government. And again on the choice of Government, we have much home work to do. However, it has been established beyond reasonable doubt that, maintenance of law and order, administration of justice, and welfare of economically and socially weaker sections of society in terms of provision of safety net for them are among others, the primary responsibilities of the state (Government). Here onwards in discharging of its function the state resorts to the government which in turn does it under the nomenclature of "governance" thus for an efficient state an efficient government resorting to reasonable governance practices is a pre-requisite. It is in this backdrop that the present paper is situated to acknowledge and understand the Indian societal position with respect to the cherished goal of Good Governance (GG)

Review of Literature

The word "govern" comes from the Greek word kubernao, to steer or pilot a ship. Plato was the first to use govern as a metaphor in his Republic, which he applied to the philosopher-king steering the ship of state. It was then passed on to Latin and then on to many languages. In English it has been defined as supremacy, ascendancy, domination, power authority, control, etc.

Towards the end of the cold war, the usage of the term was revitalized as donor agencies, notably the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), and Western countries urged the countries of the former Union

of Soviet Socialist Republics and the countries of the developing world to undertake political, economic and administrative reforms and to practice good governance. The conceptualization of the term does not, however, seem to have been consistent, and it has generated various definitions and meanings. GG as per the World Bank is defined as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development" (World Bank, 1992). The Asian Development Bank (ADB) stresses upon the role of managing economic and social resources for development. It defines GG as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development" (ADB, 1995). The African development bank (AfDB) stresses upon the power dimension involved in governance. The process referring to the way in which power is exercised in the management affairs of a nation. (AfDB, 1999). United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) addresses the holistic nature of the concept of governance. UNDP calls governance a "system of values, policies, and institutions by which a society manages its economic and social affairs. It is the way a society organizes itself to make and implement decisions . . ." (UNDP 2000).

Narrowly defined, GG consists of either a separate process or part of management or leadership processes. These processes and systems are typically administered by a government. While discussing governance in particular institutions, the quality of governance is often compared to a standard of good governance. In other words, no theory of governance would be intelligible unless it is seen in the context of its time. In ancient India, it is noticed that king or the ruler was bounded by the dharma which precisely meant to ensure good governance to the people. "Rajdharna" was the code of conduct or the rule of law which was superior to the will of the ruler. Even in the great epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana, the rulers abide by the principles of good governance which are more often cited in many occasions. Arthashastra written by Kautilya, the minister of the famous King Chandragupta Maurya which is a treasure-house filled with precious gems of wisdom. Arthashastra extensively deals with the policies of statecraft and state administration, have wide relevance in recent times. "Artha" is defined as material wellbeing of the people living on Earth and "Shastra" shows how the state administration should be carried out in the best interests of the people. Kautilya in his treatise, Arthshastra while defining governance has emphasized on few key pillars of the area such as justice, ethics, anti-autocratic form of government as bigger framework of art of governance. (Chapter V, "The Duty of the Chamberlain" in Book II, "The Duties of the Government Superintendents") The key elements of Kautilya's policy are the protection, welfare and prosperity of the common and its people which is the utmost concern of the ruler.

Governance can be defined as the rule of the rulers, typically within a given set of rules, a process by which authority is conferred on rulers by

which they make the rules and by which these rules are enforced and modified, while good governance requires an identification of both the rulers and the rules as well as the various processes by which they are selected, defined and linked together and with the society generally. (World Bank, 1991). Governance is viewed as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. (UNDP, 1997). The concept of governance denotes the use of political authority and exercise of control in a society in relation to the management of its resources for social and economic development. This broad definition encompasses the role of public authorities in establishing the environment in which economic operators function and in determining the distribution of benefits as well as the nature of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. (OECD, 1995). According to Goran Hyden, (2000) "Governance was never allowed to become a conceptual straightjacket but was expected to function as a rather loose framework within which each researcher could creatively explore political issues of significance. The problem that we encounter therefore is not the limitations stemming from the imposition of a confining concept, but rather the opposite. The challenge of making sense of the wider range of interpretations of governance that the authors bring to the agenda." Halder, (2004) argues that "Good governance should not only take care of maximum 'opportunity' or 'liberty' to the citizens for full flowering of their innate capabilities, which have social relevance in a given set of conditions, defined by the existing level of literacy and the economic circumstances, but should also ensure the favourable atmosphere for changing the existing set of conditions for a better one". Vittal (1997) expresses the view that, in a liberalized economy, the engine of development will be good governance. He laid a great emphasis on the supreme importance of checking corruption in the context of governance for economic development. Bordhan (1997) holds that corruption is found to be one of the most damaging consequences of poor governance characterized by lack of both transparency and accountability. Corruption lowers investment and hinders economic growth and human development by limiting access to basic social services as well as increasing the cost of their delivery. It also increases poverty, subverts the financial system, and undermines the legitimacy of the state. Thus, corruption is anti-poor, anti-development, anti-growth, anti-investment and inequitable. The cost of corruption to a nation is very high. Governance is a concept of many proprietors and many varieties of definition and explanation. This note responds especially to the approach recently articulated in Governance by Francis Fukuyama. He emphasizes bureaucratic capabilities as a key aspect of governance (Fukuyama 2013a).

Quoting Jawaharlal Nehru's famous "Tryst with Destiny" speech delivered on the midnight of August 14th and 15th as India gained her independence:

"The service of India means the service of millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity. The ambition of the greatest men of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us, but as long as there are tears and suffering so long our work will not be over"

The verbs and doing words in the speech are still in progress. A deeper look at these tasks would clearly establish that these goals are entirely within the realm of good governance.

Andrews's leans in his definition of governance more in the general direction proposed by this article: The core theoretical understanding of "governance" should be "the exercise of authority by governments on behalf of citizens." Governance indicators, he writes, should therefore focus (as the Index of African Governance does) on "specific fields of engagement" in which governments perform on behalf of citizens. "Indicators should emphasize outcomes. The true indicators of governance" (Andrews 2013, 6; Gisselquist 2012; Rothberg and Gisselquist 2009).

Objectives of the Study

In light of the above discussion the paper is an attempt to meet the following objectives

1. To understand what impedes India achieve the cherished goal of Good Governance.
2. To acknowledge the initiatives taken by Indian Government and know the opportunities there in.
3. To recommend some interventions to be made at the macro level so as to accelerate India's catch up with GG.

Importance of the Study

Contemporary India is at the forefront of turning itself into an economic powerhouse. It has improved its position and role both at the regional as well as at the international level. However it is disheartening to underline that squalor, filth, illiteracy, unemployment, poverty and under provision of social overhead capital is still rampant, even after 66 years Independence. There has got to be something fundamentally wrong with the strategy that Indian state has chosen in discharging its primary duties. As such today, the foremost challenge over the way for government is to improve citizens' trust in them. Thus instead of delivering GG which would have made people repose trust in the political system of the state the government has now to invest in reposing trust instead of in governance! Moreover the growing concern of market led system entails systematic and parallel governance. This study provides some understanding of what ails India's move toward the achievement of GG. It is an attempt to help us understand the now provided and *the* needed frameworks of good governance. Some new initiatives to speedy realization of GG are also outlined.

Research Methodology

The study is based on secondary data. It is framed after an analysis of various research papers, books, and articles from journals and magazines.

Governmental and Non-Governmental reports and policy documents have been analyzed for reaching the conclusions drawn. Deductive method of qualitative analysis has been followed in presentation of the assertions and observations.

"India is rich country inhabited by poor people" is an oft quoted description of this great international player even in the 66th year of its independence. A mixed economy model worked by the earliest planners with a tilt towards progressive socialism has not worked well, given the fact that India still lags behind a considerable number of nations on most of the development indicators. As such a study of the obstacles before India achieving the cherished goals need to be outlined. As such we below outline some of the most prominent of the obstacles which inhibit deliverance of good governance in India

Challenges and Obstacles over the way

Despite the successful incorporation of values and standards into the constitution, Dr. Ambedkar (quoted in A. A. Vakil, 1985) warned that the state will fail, despite the constitution, if people and parties that represent them act irresponsibly. He says, "However good a constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it happen to be bad". The values adopted in the foundational cannons of the republic were gradually diluted by the unprincipled resulting into a severe crisis of governance. No doubt positive steps too presented themselves over the scene but however good the efforts would have been, certain challenges before them slugged their growth. Some major flaws belying the hopes and increasing resentment and sullen are:

Corruption

Corruption is the most serious cause as well as the worst outcome of bad governance. It can be firmly stated that bad governance crops corruption and corruption crops bad governance. Firstly, good behaviour is not consistently recognized and rewarded by the state and bad behaviour is not checked and punished. Infact there is a strong feeling that corrupt behaviour ensures rewards and successes. Corruption is relatively inherent in terms of client-public puzzle, harassed by opaque rules and procedures, excessive delay in disposal of public matters.¹ This proliferates mindless control and poor commitments at all levels. Corruption not only hits the poor hardest but makes a mockery of financial system and it actively works against the legitimacy of the state. Poverty, investment, growth and development, all suffer at the hands of corruption. Its effects are extremely damaging, far reaching and pervasive.

Literacy

Literacy in India is an indispensable means of effective social and economic participation, contributing to human development and poverty reduction. India is one of the countries where literacy level is still below the threshold level of 75% and gigantic efforts are needed to achieve and sustain the level. Without literate and informed citizens, no democracy can be participative in the true sense India's progress in providing access to quality and

relevant education to its children and youth is indeed a story of mixed results, with some remarkable outcomes and some nonstarters. While India can boast of contributing a large number of technically qualified people, it is equally appalling that the same country accounts for more than a third of world's illiterates. It is not a surprise that the states that have more educated people have been able to address several social and health issues e.g. states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh have better sex ratios and have reduced their fertility rates or infant mortality rates faster than educationally backward states like Bihar and Rajasthan.²

Divisive tendencies and Extremism

In a country of over a billion people Indian nationalism has for long survived the divisive tendencies of caste, creed, religion and language. But in recent past growing violence in the name of religion and sub nationalism has posed a great threat to the smooth functioning of democracy in India. At the same time a policy suitable to one sect may turn unfavourable to another sect. A halt in the cog of governance often appears when questions arise between the majority group in the country and a big minority. There is also an organized attempt by forces inimical to freedom and peace in region to destroy Indian democracy by striking at very roots of our nationhood. Over a period of time there has been a systematic effort to spread communal disharmony and conflict in India. By weakening the fabric of our nationhood these terrorists seek to destroy our nationhood these terrorists seek to destroy our wellbeing and the foundation of our prosperity and welfare. In the realm of such realities, policy makers are put still and ignorant of how urgently they need to act and find it expedient to kick the ball down the rapidly crumbling road.

Unemployment

For the past few years India has been facing slumping growth and soaring unemployment level. The employment growth in organized sector, public and private combined has declined during the period between 1994 and 2007 and the situation got aggravated with the onset of situations like global financial crisis and Euro debt crisis. It has been remarked that there was a decrease in employment of about half a million workers during the period following the global meltdown.³ On the same front XIth five year plan which targeted an employment generation count of 58 million jobs remained under equipped by creating a count of 47 million jobs with a soaring labour force rate of 11.7 million.⁴ Such a yawning gap between the rates of growth of labour force and employment creation keep working like lubricants in catalyzing the job of vicious circles.

Nepotism

If power is defined as the ability to influence events, processes, resources and human behaviour for the larger public good then such power is severely restricted to state functionaries at every level. However if power is defined as pelf, privilege, patronage, petty, tyranny, harassment, then almost all our state functionaries enjoy this negative power in abundance. Such a condition is often cited as

criminalization of politics. As a result all state functionaries have perfectly plausible rationale and realistic explanations and alibis for non performance. The hapless citizen, who expects results, is perpetually frustrated. This to some extent is true to our system too and which represents a fundamental flaw in our governance structure making a possible vision for vast area of non- performance, of pervasive insensitivity and un responsiveness.

This synoptic review of the Indian socio-political fabric throws up considerable challenges to policy planning and achievement of any specified objectives of public service and policy. However certain opportunities therein are inherent, as follows:

Initiatives and Opportunities there in.

Like every ink does not possess a perfect mistake eraser, so does public work. Till now technology has not been enough creative to invent a drug or instrument which could erase or vanish misconduct and mis-governance. In a reasonably efficient and responsive governance structure, there has to be a high degree of flexibility and self correcting mechanisms so that the system is functional. Self correction is the ability of institutions of state to constantly learn from past experience and improve them in order to serve the people better. Various initiatives have been taken in India to empower common man and enhance effective functioning of governance. They include:

Anti-Corruption Measures

Various anti-corruption measures include setting up of different departments and organizations to investigate cases of bribery and corruption. They include Special Police Establishments, CBI and vigilance organizations like Administrative Vigilance Division of Home Affairs and Vigilance Units in respective ministries and departments in their counterparts. Apart from these there are Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) and State Vigilance Commission (SVC) and Divisional Vigilance Commission (DVC) to investigate in their respective realms. Setting up of an institution of Lokpal was another welcome step albeit being a hung due even today. Right to Education Act, 2009 was another landmark initiative by the government to combat corruption. The revisions in Pay Commissions and generation of an incentive and appropriate allowance structures were some other bold steps taken by the government. Such steps help not only in strengthening the political system and government mechanisms but also help in the working of open and competitive market economy.

Right to Information Act

The best way to ensure transparency and accountability in governance is provided through increased and participation of people. In 2005, Indian Parliament passed Right to Information Act which gave people the potential to change there very idea of governance and the power equation between common people and government. A common man has access to information regarding government projects, schemes and other activities. This act has ensued citizens' 'Right to Accessibility'. It has decentralized power which now is not confined to few

rather is available equally to all. It has also empowered people to seek definite and direct answer from officials of their work or lack of it. RTI made it possible to a great extent, for the people to decide and determine the way they want to be governed; it gave the common people a defining power to shape schemes and policies by lending them a voice to aspirations of ordinary citizens in issues of governance.

e-Governance

e-Governance shows how governments can be more open and pave the way to participate in democracy since it is about making the transition from the industrial society to the information society. By going on –line governments create a healthy employment and business climate to succeed in the knowledge economy. Creatively, an acceptance of the need for change and new technology can together give governments a renewed ability to offer society a lead.

The Govt. of India has formulated the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) to expedite deployment of Information Technology in governance with a vision to improve delivery of services to citizens, business services and other stakeholders. It has been recognized that a quantum jump in the quality of services is possible by its adoption and implementation. E-Governance has been able to achieve a greater level of cost reduction and efficiency gains. It has not only reduced the number of trips needed to access different offices but provided information transparently, increased the quality of service delivery to businesses and customers also. Allowing people to provide their own ideas and suggestions in forums and on-line communities enhance their direct participation in decision making. Such attributes open a wide window to transparency, anti-corruption and accountability.

UID Technology

It's now a realized fact that the problem of reaching the benefit of various programmes to the poorest of Indians will not come about by just the provision of schemes. Instead it is an issue of identifying the people who deserve them. Aadhaar is a national endeavour to count all the Indians of the country and provide them an identity document or a card, essentially a number. The Aadhaar number will be linked to the biometric and demographic information to ensure the uniqueness of a person. Besides such social benefits, the technology benefits to the government could be manifold. The UID Technology would enable creation of an e-governance cloud platform to be shared by central and state governments. It would also give the common India an opportunity of self service. An Aadhaar linked banking solution can create local networks of business correspondence that enable residents in urban and rural India make transactions remotely through mobile device. It would also promise to a comprehensive and inclusive technology platform which will be able to verify and establish the identities of the seasonal migrant workers. There is also much hope that it will be a fulcrum for converging services such as PDS, health and education, banking

inclusion, remittances and make them more accessible to migrant community.

Direct Benefit Transfer

DBT is a tool of ensuring better and more timely delivery of benefits to the people. With this the actual disbursement would take place at the door steps of the beneficiaries through a network of business correspondence. The link of Aadhaar with DBT would ensure that the problems of 'duplicates' and 'ghosts' get addressed. Another argument in favour of cash transfer is that the current in kind subsidies are market distorting and the belief that therefore cash transfers may be more efficient. It also addresses the problems of leakages and costs incurred for whatever subsidies deliver. Yet DBT would prove to be a magic wand if it only supplements the necessary existing in kind subsidy systems like PDS instead of supplanting them.

Looking into the Future

Given the fact that Good governance in all its celebrated connotations is situated far from realization in the near future in India, some alternative initiatives are inevitable. To our understanding a proper implementation of the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments can go a long way in realizing GG in India. A move towards technology based public sector interventions can go a long way in diminishing bureaucratic discretion in decision making. This aspect of public policy in India has been a very important inhibitor in realizing such goals as GG.

Conclusion

India's political leadership, policy makers and business brains are actuated by a strong desire to make the country an economic super power in the 21st century. The imperatives of democracy however are forcing Indian political leadership to look deeper into the causes of poverty, inequality and sufferings of common man. Their proper belief in good governance should include stimulating productive energies of people, encouraging broader participation of all people in productive processes and a more equitable sharing of their benefits must become more central elements in development strategies and development cooperation. People have to turn willing. The good governance in the country can only thrive when every Indian citizen would ignite himself in the flame of self-recognition adhering to mutual trust, fraternity and integrity as a means to perceive India of our dream.

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Footnotes

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