

Good Governance Challenges in India

David V. Kiangte*

Abstract

The criminalization of politics and corruption are two major challenges of good governance in India which need to be addressed on urgent basis. The Gandhian values of simple living and self-less service to public causes are rapidly vanishing. The dictum that 'howsoever high, the law is above you' is sought to be replaced by rule of men. To tackle the process of Good Governance the educated youngsters should be encouraged to enter into Indian politics and these young leaders should be properly nourished by the patriotic commitments and abide by the core principles of democratic governance. The citizens are ready to pay the price for good services offered by the state, but what is required is transparent, accountable and intelligible governance system absolutely free from bias and prejudices. In the present era when India is progressively moving towards development and prosperity, there is a need is to reformulate our national strategy of good governance in the country. It is being widely appreciated that good governance is dependant not merely upon good policy advice but more importantly on the processes and incentives to design and implement good policies themselves.

Key words: Good governance, civil society, Right to Information, efficient, corruption, transparent, accountable

“The Punishment suffered by the wise that refuse to take part in the government, is to suffer under the government of bad men”. - Plato

The most significant political change in the 20th century has been the emergence of the welfare state and the end of the colonial rule. This change took place particularly after the Second World War. Poverty and poor countries were unknown before the war. Backward and under developed countries, previously unknown, came into headlines as the theatres of war.

These countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America faced the heavy burden of tackling the complex problems of poverty, hunger, ignorance, inequality, and so on. No single word can cope with the diversities of such desperate nations as Afghanistan, Ghana, India and Mexico, to mention only a few that do not represent the extremes of contrasts but do suggest

*Dr. David V. Kiangte is Asst. Professor, Department of Public Administration, Govt. Lawngtlai College

the variety that exists in their location, resources, population, history, culture, religion and other factors. Despite all their difference, all these countries can be called 'developing' because of what they do have in common - all are caught up in the process of a social change. They are moving from traditional towards the modern type from what *Riggs* calls 'Agraria' towards 'Industria', from agricultural society to industrialized society. They are in transitional stage, no longer traditional but not yet modern or developed.

Soon after Independence, there was widespread belief that without the role of the state, it was not possible either to accelerate the process of growth or to create an industrial base for sustained economic development of the country. The Second Five Year Plan stated in unequivocal terms, "The adoption of the Socialist pattern of society as the national objective, as well as the need for planned and rapid development require that all industries of basic and strategic importance, or in the nature of public utility services, should be in the public sector. Other industries which are essential and require investment on a scale which only the State, in the present circumstances, could provide have also to be in the public sector. The State has, therefore, to assume direct responsibility for the future development over a wider area."¹ The Second plan further emphasized, "The public sector has to expand rapidly. It has not only to initiate developments which the private sector is either unwilling or unable to undertake,

it has to play the dominant role in shaping the entire pattern of investment in the economy, whether it makes the investment directly or whether these are made by the private sector. The private sector has to play its part within the framework of comprehensive plan accepted by the community."² Outlining then strategy of development, the Second plan further opined, "The use of Modern technology requires large scale production and a unified control and allocation of resources in certain major line of activity. These include exploitations of mineral and basic and capital good industries which are major determinants of the rate of growth of the economy. The responsibility of new development in these fields must be undertaken in the main by the State, and existing units have to fall in line with emerging pattern....In a growing economy, which gets increasingly diversified there is scope for both the public and the private sectors to expand simultaneously, but it is inevitable, if development is to proceed at the pace envisaged and to contribute effectively to the attainment of the larger social ends in view, that the public sector must grow only absolutely but also relatively to private sector."³ This clearly indicates that India, as an under developed country is faced with major problems such as:

1. Low standard of National wealth and consequently few resources of investment.

2. Uneven distribution of income.
3. Weak monetary and fiscal policies.
4. Low general standard of education.
5. Rapid population growth.
6. Production oriented towards primary goods, with slight possibility of profit and subject to market fluctuations.
7. No pressure groups which might be able to fight for greater social justice.
8. Weak public administration, bedeviled by corruption.
9. Lack of public spirit and national loyalty.
10. Environmental problems...and so on.

The preamble of the Indian Constitution reflects the goals and ideals the Indian state should pursue for the well-being of its people, that is, to secure to all its citizens justice-social, economic and political. The test of good governance lies in the goals and objectives of a government, in its policies and programmes in the manner of their execution, in the results achieved and above all in the general perception of the people about the quality of functioning of its various agencies, their attitudes and behavior towards the public, their sincerity, honesty and commitment towards public duties.

With this, the concept and role of the government has undergone a substantial change. Its traditional role of being merely the custodian of law and order has expanded considerably to include many

other responsibilities. The heavy burden of tackling the complex problems of underdevelopment has fallen mostly on the new and inexperienced governments. The instrument of socio-economic change is mainly the bureaucracy. Its role is no more confined to merely the maintenance of law and order and collection of revenue but has extended to bring about wide spread socio-economic transformations. Political parties and interest groups are still inadequately organized and do not provide effective liaison between the different interests and administrative agencies in shaping and carrying out policy. Public Administration is thus involved in multifarious activities, ranging from planning of economic resources and managing State enterprises to the looking after of health, education, social welfare, etc.

The notion of Governance and Good governance has become matters of global concern in the present context. The practices of good governance are presented as the prerequisites of democracy and development. Governance refers to the forms of political system. In a democratic setup, policies are formulated keeping people's welfare in mind. Good governance in such a system is based on rule of law and stands for a clean, honest, impartial, transparent efficient accountable and open administrative system. In other words, it is a citizen caring, citizen friendly and responsive administration. The prime duty of such administration is to preserve, promote and protect the rights of the citizens, as provided by the constitution;

so that they may attain the goals of development aspired by them.

Thus, good governance should constitute welfare of the people, without any discrimination based on class, creed, sex, religion etc. there should be special emphasis on the down trodden weaker section of society, physically and mentally challenged people. It should give right to information to the public, enforce accountability and increase transparency in the public dealings and strengthen the grievances redressal mechanism.

The wellbeing of a community depends upon the choices made by the people and granted by the authority. The whole idea of good governance is the participative system of governance in which those who are called upon to govern on behalf of the people are motivated with a will to give their best, serving and doing well to the people, solving their problems and making their lives more livable, satisfying and enjoyable. The essential prerequisites for quality governance are that, the system should be good and suited to the needs, aspirations, background and ethos of the people concerned and those selected for operating the system should be endowed with the character and competence and motivated by the spirit of public service.

Good Governance is confined to “surveillance over macroeconomic policies, transparency of Government Accounts, effectiveness of public resources management and the stability and transparency of the economic and

regulatory environment for Private Sector activity”.⁴

Good Governance in India

The notion of governance was also used for the first time in 1992 by the World Bank. The World Bank has underlined the need of good governance which leads to economic, human and institutional development.

The World Bank has identified the following characteristics of good governance. These are:

- 1. Participation of people in the process of Government:** The active participation of people is necessary for the practice of good governance. This requires freedom of expression and association and decentralization of government and its structures and processes. In India while people’s participation is ensured through representative democracy and political power is decentralized through the local self government agencies, citizens’ active association at decision-making is not strong as civil society organisations are in nascent stage.
- 2. Political Accountability:** It means not only the government institutions and public officials but also the private sector and civil service organization should be accountable to people for their activities. It has been observed that the lines of political and administrative accountability are weak in India.
- 3. Legal Framework based on Rule of Law and Independence of Judiciary:** While India has adopted both rule of law

and independence of judiciary, in actual practice there is biased implementation of rules. Also, the judicial process is delayed and costly, which does not go well with the protection of human rights, social justice and guard against exploitation of marginalized sections of society.

4. Transparency and responsiveness in the Administration: India has inherited the British system of Bureaucracy which was tuned to exclusiveness and secrecy. However, with changing requirement, the administration is gradually being made responsive to the needs and aspirations of people. Also, in order to bring transparency in the administration, the Right to Information Act was passed in 2005 in which, every public authority is obliged to provide public information to an applicant within a period of one month. The effective implementation of the provisions of this Act is required to bring about desired level of transparency in the administration.

5. Efficiency and Effectiveness of Administrative and Political system: It means that the government processes and institutions should produce results which meet the needs of society and citizens. This requires the effective management and use of various resources to achieve desired goals. On this count, India lacks far behind. The public policies are slow in implementation leading to overrun of costs and failure to achieve the desired objectives. The process of decision-making is also not efficient and

rationalized with multiple of agencies and overlapping roles.

6. Cooperation between the Government and Civil Society Organisation: In India the growth of Civil Society Organizations is at nascent stage, leaving little scope for effective cooperation between the two. The culture of such cooperation is yet to evolve. However, the government has taken some steps to strengthen and involve civil society organisation in the process of governance. The success of Bhagidari movement in Delhi is a case in point.

7. Equity and Inclusiveness: This means that the governance should aim at incorporating the weaker sections of the society in the mainstream of development process. The gap between the rich and poor should be reduced to the minimum. Though the planned development strategy in India has always aimed at the goal of 'growth with equity', the gap between the rich and poor is still high and about one-third (1/3) of Indian people are still below poverty line.

8. Consensus oriented: There are several actors and different view-points in the society. Good governance requires the mediation of different, sometimes conflicting interests to reach a broad consensus about the fundamental goals and methods of governance. In India, while we find a reasonable amount of political consensus on external front, the internal policies and development strategy suffers from lack of political consensus. The lack of political consensus mars the

effective implementation of the policies and programmes.

Major Initiatives: The two major initiatives that have been taken up in India for empowering the common man and effective functioning of governance include Right to Information and E-Governance.

Right to Information: James Madison in 1822 gave eloquent expression to the urgent need for ‘popular information’ in a democracy. As he said, “A popular government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to Farce or a Tragedy, or, perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance. And people, who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge’s gives.” Implicit in Madison’s remark is the essence of democracy which is rule by the people. The citizens are the center of democratic governance. Every citizen has the right to participate in public life, governance and society. The Right to Information is a product of both Institutions and Culture. Institutions are shaped by the laws and the structure of government. Culture is rooted in the history and practice of government as well as in the broader traditional understandings of the accountability of leaders and of what constitutes representation.⁵ Right to Information is derived from the fundamental right of freedom of speech and expression under Article 19 of the Indian Constitution which says that “All the citizens shall have

the right to freedom of speech and expression. As a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), India is under an international obligation to effectively guarantee to citizens the Right to Information as per Article 19 of the ICCPR. The Right to Information Act was enacted on 12th October, 2005 which marks a significant shift in the Indian democracy and ushered a new era of empowerment of the common man in India. Through this Act one can examine, audit, review and assess the government works and decisions to ensure that these are consistent with the principles of public interest, integrity and justice. The greater the access of the citizen to information, the greater would be the responsiveness of the government to community needs. Right to information therefore promotes openness, transparency and accountability in administration by making the government more open to public scrutiny. Without information, the common man cannot adequately exercise his rights and responsibilities or make informed choices. So Right to Information is the most effective instrument to check corruption where the citizen has the right to take the initiatives to seek information from the state and thereby enforce transparency and accountability.

E-Governance: E-Governance refers to the use by Government agencies of information technologies that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses and other arms of government. These technologies can serve a variety of

different ends; better delivery of government services, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient government management. The resulting benefit can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth and cost reduction. Traditionally, the interaction between a citizen or business and government agency took place in a government office. With emerging information and communication technologies it is possible to locate service centers closer to the clients. E-Government aims to make the interactions between the government and citizens, government and business enterprises and inter agency relationships more friendly convenient, transparent and inexpensive.

E-Governance effectively delivers better programming and services in the era of newly emerging information and communication technologies (ICTs), which herald new opportunities for rapid social and economic transformation worldwide. The governments at the national and state level seek to harness their potential and create new dimension of economic and social progress through bringing change in traditional governance structure to e-governance system. E - Governance has direct impact on its citizens who derive benefits through direct transactions with the services offered by the government. It explores new facet of leadership approach, skill and mindset of the citizens of the country. However, the process of e-governance requires

sustained commitment, political will; adequate resources which can develop a system of e-governance in order to make the current policies and practices of government more efficient and effective. E-Governance can renovate the relationship between public, private sector and government and enables better policy outcomes, high quality services and greater engagements with the citizens of the country.

Challenges to Good Governance in India:

While evaluating India's stand amongst other countries of the world, it is revealed that India is compared favorably with many developing countries though it has a long way to go to attain the level of developed countries. **The criminalization of politics and corruption** are two major challenges of good governance in India which need to be addressed on urgent basis. The Criminalization of the political process and the unholy nexus between politicians, civil servants, and business houses are having a baneful influence on public policy formulation and governance. Political class as such is losing respect.

The threat to India's democratic governance is from criminals and musclemen who are entering into state legislative assemblies and national Parliament in sizeable numbers. A political culture seems to be taking roots in which membership of state legislatures and Parliament are viewed as offices for seeking private gain and for making

money. Such elements have also found place in Council of Ministers and a Prime Minister or a Chief Minister in an era of coalition politics cannot take strong action for that might lead to the fall of the government itself. The Gandhian values of simple living and self-less service to public causes are rapidly vanishing. The dictum that 'howsoever high, the law is above you' is sought to be replaced by rule of men.

It is true that public is not a mute spectator to this phenomenon nor is the media. The process of judicial accountability has succeeded in sending several legislators and ministers to jail. But new methods have also been devised to fiddle away with the processes of law. Criminals facing prosecution get out on bail and even go scot-free. During the period of consideration of their bail petition as well as trial, the doctor invariably finds a serious ailment that enables the accused to escape discomforts of jail by admitting himself in a 5-star hospital. The question staring at all of us is how to close the gate of the portals of democracy for criminals. At the behest of the Election Commission, the Indian Parliament has enacted certain laws that makes it obligatory on the candidate contesting an election for Parliament or State Assembly to declare as to whether he is accused for any offence punishable under law for two years or more, for which charges have been framed. Candidates would also have to disclose whether he has been convicted for any offence in which the punishment has been awarded

for one year or more for the information of the voter. All these have created a favorable environment for curbing criminalization of politics. But it is necessary to move further to debar criminals from contesting elections. However, the nexus of crime and politics is so strong that the common citizens of the country have no stand to say or exert their rights. In order to prevent such misuses on May 2, 2002, the Supreme Court of India has given a historic judgement following the public interest litigation (PIL) led by an NGO that, every candidate contesting an election to Parliament, State Legislatures or Municipal Corporations has to give true declarations of candidate's educational qualifications, criminal charges and financial records. Though many commissions and committees have been framed to bring improvement in the situation, these reformative measures are just a drop in the ocean. So a new beginning is necessary to ameliorate criminalization from politics and the seriousness of the matter should be properly worked out. **The educated youngsters** should be encouraged to enter into Indian politics and these young leaders should be properly nourished by the patriotic commitments and abide by the core principles of democratic governance.

While corruption has virtually spread in almost all aspects of public life the person lying on the street is left to struggle incessantly with corruption throughout his life. Corruption is

relatively inherent in terms of client public puzzle, harassed by opaque rules and procedures, excessive delay in disposal of public matters. It not only averts the benefits of globalization to reach the common men but also denies transparency, accessibility and accountability, confuses rules and procedures, proliferates mindless control and poor commitments at all levels. Hence, there is foremost need to check corruption at all levels through raising public consciousness and strong commitments not to make dishonest compromises which would put down the moral values and ethics of life. India being the largest democratic country in the world is struggling hard to emerge as world class leader in the fields of social and economic development. The high level of corruption in India has been widely perceived as a major obstacle in improving the quality of governance. While human greed is obviously a driver of corruption, it is the structural incentives and poor enforcement system to punish the corrupt that have contributed to the rising curve of graft in India. The complex and nontransparent system of command and control, monopoly of the government as a service provider, underdeveloped legal framework, and lack of information and weak notion of citizens' rights have provided incentives for corruption in India. A conscious programme for strengthening of public awareness and also empowering the existing anti-corruption agencies would be required. The statutory right to information has been

one of the most significant reforms in public administration. The Right to Information Act provides a strong national framework within which public awareness programmes could take place. Corruption takes place within a frame. Accordingly, basic reforms in file management, government rules and regulations, provision of public expenditure review could provide the concerned citizens the relevant knowledge to hold service providers accountable. This would ensure that the resources that belong to people are used in the right way.

Conclusion

In today's complex world of governing, government alone is not capable of coping with myriad problems. A degree of networking with other societal organizations will enhance the capacity of governance in the society as a whole. Also, this will facilitate development of social capital in terms of social groups agreed involvement and co-sharing of problem solving. The effective functioning of governance is the prime concern of every citizen of the country. The citizens are ready to pay the price for good services offered by the state, but what is required is transparent, accountable and intelligible governance system absolutely free from bias and prejudices. In the present era when India is progressively moving towards development and prosperity, there is a need is to reformulate our national strategy of good governance in the country. It is being widely appreciated that good governance is dependant not merely

upon good policy advises but more importantly on the processes and incentives to design and implement good policies themselves. Dysfunctional and ineffective public institutions are increasingly seen to be at the heart of the economic development challenge. Misguided resource allocations, excessive government interventions, and widespread corruption have helped in perpetuation of poverty. The weak institutions of governance make an adverse impact on service delivery. Poverty reduction depends on improvements in the quality and timely delivery of services to poor people on basic education, health, potable water and other social and infrastructure requirements. The major challenge is to put in place institutional arrangements for service delivery that are workable in a particular district or a region and are made to function in a manner that are intelligible to the local people and that also encourages them to participate. Such institutions would be responsive to the citizenry and reasonably efficient in the delivery of public services.

Work Cited

- ¹ Government of India, Planning Commission, *Second Five Year Plan* (1956), p.29
- ²*Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.
- ³*Ibid.*, p.23
- ⁴ Micheal Camdessus, Managing Director IMF in his address to the UN on July 02. The World Bank, *Governance and Development*, Washington DC., 1992. T.H Green, *Lectures on the Principle of Political Obligation*, pp. 93-141, Longmans, 1921. Times of India, 12.12.2007, *Judicial Activism versus Judicial Overreach*, New Delhi. UNDP and Right to Information, Seminar report, Oslo, Norway, 22-23 May, 2006.
- ⁵ UNDP Practical Guide Book on RTI, 2006.

References

- Agarwal and Singh, *Approach to the problem of Underdevelopment*
- Asok Kumar Mukhopadhyay (ed.), *Right to information*, Administrative Training Institute, Government of West Bengal, Kolkata, 2007.
- Dr. Dan Rameniyi (ed.), ICEG 2006, *The Second International Conference on E-Government*, University of Pittsburg, USA, 12-13 october, 2006.
- JAN Kooiman (ed.), *Modern Governance: New Government-Society Interactions*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1993.

David V. Kiangte

- James N. Rosenau, "Governance, order and Change in World Politics", in Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel (eds.), *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World politics*, Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- M.P Singh and Rekha Saxena, *Indian Politics: Contemporary Issues and Concern*, Prentice-Hall of India, New Delhi, 2008, Eastern Economy Edition.
- Rajni Kothari, *Politics in India*, Orient Longman Ltd., New Delhi, 1970 and *Rethinking Democracy*, Orient Longman Ltd., New Delhi, 2005
- Seang-Tae Kim, *Towards a New Paradigm of e-Govern ment: from Bureaucracy Model to Governance Model*, paper presented at the 26th International Congress of Administrative Sciences (Seoul) 2004.