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**GOOD GOVERNANCE IN INDIA: NEED FOR INNOVATIVE APPROACHES**

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**KARNAL**

**ABSTRACT**

*This paper is an attempt to provide a framework for good governance in India by identifying its essential features and shortcomings in its working and emphasizes need for innovative approaches. No theory of governance could be intelligible unless it is seen in the context of its time. India's democratic experience of the past six decades has clearly established that good governance must aim at expansion of social opportunities and removal of poverty. Good governance, according to the author, means securing justice, empowerment, employment and efficient delivery of services. The paper deals with these subjects in detail and also analyses administrative and political fault lines. It identifies criminalization of politics and corruption as two major challenges. It also highlights shifts in meaning and content of national values of the freedom movement particularly those of nationalism, democracy, secularism, non-alignment, and mixed economy and its impact on the nitty gritty of administration as well as on the intellectual buildup of the organs of the Indian State. The paper lists several areas of concern that need to be addressed energetically and calls for synergy of efforts between government, the market and the civil society. Innovations are generally taking place. There are, however, two areas that need special attention by innovators, namely, economic empowerment of women and livelihood programmes based on local resources and upgraded skills. The need is to formulate a national strategy that accords primacy to the Gandhian principle of 'antodaya' without sacrificing growth and by making instruments of State accountable for good governance.*

**KEYWORDS**

Good governance, innovative approaches.

**1) INTRODUCTION**

Good governance is an indeterminate term used in international development literature to describe how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources. Governance is "the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented)". The term governance can apply to corporate, international, national, local governance or to the interactions between other sectors of society. The concept of "good governance" often emerges as a model to compare ineffective economies or political bodies with viable economies and political bodies.<sup>[2]</sup> The concept centers on the responsibility of governments and governing bodies to meet the needs of the masses as opposed to select groups in society. Because the governments treated in the contemporary world as most "successful" are often liberal democratic states concentrated in Europe and the Americas, those countries' institutions often set the standards by which to compare other states' institutions when talking about governance. Because the term good governance can be focused on any one form of governance, aid organizations and the authorities of developed countries often will focus the meaning of good governance to a set of requirement that conform to the organization's agenda, making "good governance" imply many different things in many different contexts.

**2) MAJOR CHALLENGES TO GOOD GOVERNANCE**

At the obvious risk of generalization, I would like to refer to criminalization of politics and corruption as major challenges to good governance.

**i) CRIMINALIZATION OF POLITICS**

The Criminalisation 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 Indian State is facing a serious challenge to its authority from lawless elements. The jihadi terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir and its ad hoc but frequent spread to other parts of India, the insurgency in the North-East, and rapidly expanding base of naxalite movement in mainland India constitute grave challenge to democratic governance. Fortunately, one sees national consensus against jihadi terrorism and it is for the Indian State to deal firmly with this menace. Insurgency in India's North-East is largely confined now to Nagaland, Manipur and Assam and these are being tackled by democratically elected state governments with full support from the Centre. Of late, one sees a political resolve to deal with naxalites as well. Dialogue process alone would provide the final answer but in every eventuality the State has to be continually firm in order that it discharges its basic responsibility of protecting life and property of its citizens. The more insidious 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 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 law 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 favourable environment for curbing criminalization of politics. But it is necessary to move further to debar criminals from contesting elections. It is imperative, therefore, to amend Section 8 of the Representation of the People's Act 1951 to disqualify a person against whom the competent judicial authority has framed charges that relate to grave and heinous offences and corruption. It is one of the marvels of parliamentary democracy in India that notwithstanding entry of criminal elements in the Lok Sabha and in Vidhan Sabhas we have a Prime Minister of high integrity and scholarship and

several Chief Ministers whose honesty is beyond any iota of doubt. Would this category of persons among political leaders transcend narrow loyalties and cleanse the political class of criminal elements?

#### ii) CORRUPTION

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, 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. One of the recent sources of corruption at political level relates to schemes of MPLADS and MLALADS and this need to be abolished. In any case these are no legislative functions.

#### iii) CORRUPTION AND ELECTORAL REFORMS

The hitherto laissez-faire system of funding of elections is the biggest countervailing factor in the emergence of democratic India as an honest state. It is widely agreed that state funding of elections/parties will provide a certain degree of financial independence to parties and their candidates and that in turn will help reduce the incentives to raise party/election funds through corrupt means. Public financing holds great promise because it levels the playing field and gives candidates an incentive to accept spending limits. With public financing, poorer candidates can challenge well-funded ones, enlivening the debate and opening up the system. Public financing should be accompanied by free media space. The state funding of elections regime should be accompanied by strict accounting procedures including rules to internally democratise parties. All these will improve the image of political parties in the eyes of the public and help create a virtuous cycle of democratic competition within political parties for election nominations in which candidates exposed to be corrupt can expect to be weeded out over time. It will also encourage honest persons from various walks of life to join the electoral battlefield. The state funding of elections in India would also go a long way in reducing the clout of religious, ethnic and some business houses on the government.

### 3) OVERVIEW

Religion and culture play an important role in social cohesion. The religious attitude of tolerance and peace and cultural values of pluralism are conducive to good governance. And yet there is no casual relationship between religion and democracy. For democracy does not belong to any faith. Equally, no particular faith is synonymous with democracy. A look at South Asian scene would reveal that Islam did not make Pakistan a natural democracy; nor did Hinduism turn Nepal into one. Buddhism has not ensured democracy in Burma. Indian democracy is a product of freedom movement which gave primacy to values of pluralism and equal treatment to people of different faiths and ethnic backgrounds.

The constitution guarantees, the judiciary upholds it and the leadership believes in this value system. India's democracy is at the center of governance architecture. It creates opportunities, sustains leadership and generates hope. Good governance being central to the Indian democratic experience could be seen more clearly when we look at what is happening in our part of the world. Pakistan is making experiment with various forms of governance, democracy as well as military dictatorship, and merely succeeding in saving the nation-state from being a failed one. The Bangladesh Army seeks similar justification in managing and calibrating the transition to democracy, as does the Gayoom regime in the Maldives. In Sri Lanka, notwithstanding high rates of literacy and economic growth through decades-old democracy, it has not been able to secure cooperation of the Tamil minority, with the result that democracy thrives side by side with a bloody civil war. In Nepal, democratic institutions which have been undergoing serious strain under the Maoist threat are trying to resurrect under a fledgling inclusive republican order. The major shifts in India's national value system made impact both on the nitty gritty of administration as well as the intellectual build up of the civil service, the police and the judiciary. This is not the occasion to analyse how it came in the way of India's successes and failures in the social, economic and political domains, but whenever there is a major shift in political discourse governance gets affected both in its content and emphasis. The shift in national values corresponded with new democratic experiences and change in regional and global environment.

The geography of nationalism got restricted with partition in 1947 itself. The meaning and context of nationalism and non-alignment underwent major transformation on account of the Chinese perfidy in 1962. The reassertion of democracy became evident during 1975-77. India shifted from the commanding heights of the public sector economy policy and slowly opted for integration of markets and moved on the path of capitalism beginning from 1991. It is true that capitalism is not the accepted creed of the Indian nation-state. In an era of coalition governments, the national government has had to use ingenuous methods to push economic reforms to usher in rapid economic growth. This is also true of foreign 18policy arena. For our purpose, it suffices to say that the concept of good governance though in vogue all the world over, the Indian product has its own special features and flavour. In an era of shift in values, governance is marked by trial and error and new rules of the game are getting formulated as we move along. It is being widely appreciated that good governance is dependent 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 of 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. Scholars as well as administrators agree that participation of civil society in decision-making, public sector capacity building and rule of law are essential for quality and timely delivery of services. The concept and practice of good governance in a country demands that there should be constructive mechanisms and procedures that will enable the three principal actors – government, market and civil society – to play in concert and to supplement each other's capability. The working of all governments at the Centre and in the States has clearly revealed the existence of powerful interest groups who have a strong vested interest in preserving the status quo. This comes in the way of government becoming the effective agent of change and guarantor of social justice. The entrenched power group always resists attempts to alter the status quo and that too in favour of disadvantaged and poor. The poor are largely unorganized and cannot be mobilized easily because of their large numbers.

The leadership at various levels placed in the task of striking a balance between the demands of the powerful interest groups and voiceless poor have rarely gone against the powerful. There is no doubt that market has better delivery of services. Moreover, in a competitive environment, the market can be both cheaper and more effective than the government in providing certain types of services. However, the markets, controlled as it is by businessmen, operate for profits and the poor have little or no voice in the regulation of its operations. Thus, the failure of the government and the profit motive of 19the market have led to distorted developments in which the rich have become richer and the poor poorer. Market is an integral part of social order but the truth is that principles of market cannot be allowed to govern society and polity. Accordingly, no democratic government can leave market uncontrolled and free from regulations.

The poor are poor of course because of historical inequities but also on account of failure of the State to empower them adequately to get their entitlements. Democratic governance demands that the State cannot for long serve the demands of the rich and organized sectors of the society and ignore the dalits, the minorities and the women because they are unorganized and poor. It is true that despite security of tenure the permanent services including the IAS, IPS and the IFS are marked by decline in idealism of early years of the Republic. It is no denying that if political leadership becomes corrupt or apathetic to good governance, the permanent services may not remain idealistic or efficient for long. And yet the senior leadership of the All India and Central Services need to look within and develop themselves professionally and in ethical terms to fulfill the ambition of the new generation to build a strong India. How and whether the services would



rise to this challenge needs to be both posed and watched? Placed in these circumstances, a multi-sectorial approach to governance that serves the cause of growth as well as equity alone can help in achieving the goal of good governance. \

It is precisely here that NGOs, self-help groups, women's groups, legal assistance organizations and several other civil society instruments can play an influential role. In fact, most of these organizations are addressing specific concerns and know the ground realities. These organizations are at the center where they frequently interact with the government and the market. Just as the government regulates the market from committing misuses that are detrimental to society as a whole, the role of the civil society is to ensure that government is not only accountable and responsive to the citizens but it also performs its essential role as the guarantor of social justice. In the emerging multifaceted nature of governance, the civil society institutions can play a constructive role not only in harnessing the resources of the government but also in tapping the structure and resources of the market to give a fair deal to the people, and in creating an environment where sustainable development takes place. Fortunately, one clearly sees the determination of national and several state governments to provide a safety net at the bottom of economic pyramid. The middle class is a major beneficiary of new economic initiatives in the post-permit, license, quota raj. The need to awaken social consciousness of captains of industry too is being increasingly addressed. The need to accelerate the pace of these changes is obvious.

## CONCLUSION

A major shift from or even collapse of core values of freedom movement are making adverse impact on institutions of the republic and functioning of government. The new Indian republic was not always market friendly. It was expected that the state shall supersede the market by generating a system of control so that it produced a result that it would not have produced itself. In practice it degenerated into 'license permit raj' and 'inspector raj'. We are entering into an era of capitalist innovation. It leaves a lot of people out and the market laws even threaten to dominate natural environment. But as luck would have it, fear of losing control of the circumstances and routines of one's daily life and growing inequity is bringing the State back. Fear of terrorism too has contributed to the view for strengthening of the nation-state. Although a return of 'licence-permit' era is ruled out for ever as we are getting increasingly linked to the global market, good governance that people need in order to improve their lives depends, in a larger measure, on government activities and approaches. In this backdrop, India's democratic institutions are required to address the following areas of concern energetically:

1. State-sponsored development programmes must aim at reduction in poverty and improvement in productivity levels of workers. Towards these, poor people need to be directly involved.
2. Public Expenditure Review meets should be organized periodically at village, sub district and district levels to ensure proper utilization of funds and ownership of development programmes by the people.
3. Civil service should be given clear responsibility for delivery of services in respect of approved schemes and held accountable.
4. One third of seats in Assemblies and Parliament should be reserved for women.
5. Persons charge sheeted by a competent court for heinous offences and corrupt practices should be debarred from contesting elections.
6. Partial State funding of elections should be commenced urgently.
7. MPLADS and MLALADS schemes should be abolished.

The quality of democracy and the commitment and caliber of public servants both in the executive and in the judiciary would determine the outcome of the country's performance in key areas – empowerment, employment and effective delivery of services. The instruments of the State and the civil society need to be guided by the Talisman that Mahatma Gandhi prescribed for social, political and religious leadership of 21 independent India in August 1947. It reads: "I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away." This is relevant today as well, as in the name of rapid economic growth policy decisions are increasingly being taken giving regard to the interest of the market and big business. Could we reverse this process to give primacy to the principles of 'antodaya' without sacrificing growth? If that happens, good governance could be better ensured. Such governance under a sensitive leadership could provide capacity to build our inclusive polity and a future full of possibilities for everyone.

In the post Gandhi-Nehru era, the involvement of civil society in governance has become crucial. Civil groups like NGO's, women's groups, trade unions, cooperatives, guilds, faith organizations are all essential to buildings of inclusive growth. Without the involvement of the people, without their voices, without their participation and representation, a programme can only be implemented mechanically. Today, we need innovators in two areas in particular: women and livelihood programmes. Women are key to good governance. Their increasing representations in democratic institutions have provided stability to Indian polity. Women can bring constructive, creative and sustainable solutions to the table. Women participation in economic programmes needs to be augmented for in women we get expendable providers, educators, caretakers and leaders. Second relates to livelihood. Livelihood does not only mean factory jobs. It should relate to social economy and local resources as well. It should also mean upgrading of existing and traditional skills that people have possessed from time immemorial in agriculture, in animal husbandry, in fishing, in textiles and so on. Investment in up gradation of such skills would lead to harmonious relationships with nature. My own experience tells me that when you provide productive work on a regular basis to a couple, their children would automatically go to schools and shall refuse to entertain persuasions of naxalite and insurgent groups to indulge in violent acts. It is through work that a person can plan the way in which his ambition can be fulfilled.

With regular work life is no longer just about survival, but about investing in a better future for the children. Above all, when one has regular work, there is incentive to maintain a stable society. In view of deep-rooted social and economic inequities of centuries, India can not blindly follow capitalist model of growth that puts excessive reliance on market forces. For such a model would fail to provide stability to Indian polity. And yet rapid economic growth is essential to meet aspirations of the Indian youth. Placed in these circumstances, the innovators have to devise ways and means that secures both fast growth and an approach that combines Gandhian ethics with democratic temper. Innovations are taking place in the government, in the market and in the civil society. Social and political processes are getting increasingly interlinked changing the character of the elites in the countryside. In the process the high caste elites of 1950's have increasingly yielded space to intermediate caste landholders and businessmen and also holders of administrative and political offices. The nature and content of good governance would undergo changes in tune with rising expectations and fresh demands of the people. Democratic governance would expect and secure from its leadership to be alive to such aspirations and to continually tune institutions of polity to be effective instruments of citizens' welfare. One is aware that 'million mutinies' are taking place almost on a daily basis in the country. The need is to go for 'million negotiations' that would ensure that government, market and civil society work together for the poor.

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