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From Government to Governance : A brief Study of the Indian Experience

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INTRODUCTION

Good governance is the sine-qua-non for a vibrant democratic country like India. Good governance stands for full prevalence of rule of law with full accountability and transparency. It also prescribed for adequate democratisation, decentralisation, devolution of 3fs - funds, functions and functionaries, and above all the people's participation. It also means a responsible and responsive administration and government. Good governance is the key to development of a nation.

Indeed, India is bleeding with million cuts caused by proxy wars in guise of terrorist attacks externally and naxals and separatists disturbances internally. Besides, India is the home of around fifty percent malnourished children. According to UN Report, in India 30 crore people still live in extreme poverty. What to talk of '*Roti, Kapada and Makan*' India is yet to provide safe drinking water to all. More than 40 crore people in India are below poverty line. Similar is the case of unemployment. No doubt India has large pool of young population but work eludes most of them.

Undoubtedly, million and million have been pumped on more than 100 programmes and projects of rural development, it is yet to reach the targeted beneficiaries. Late Rajiv Gandhi's estimate that out of one rupee only 15 paisa reach to the beneficiary still holds the truth. The leakages are on mass scale leading to scam and mega scam, whether MGNREGA, IAY, NRHM or other development programmes funds are swindled on large scale by politicians, bureaucrats, middlemen leaving only pittance for the beneficiaries. The last man in the last row is on the receiving end. The plight of deprived, downtrodden and destitute is pitiable. Hence, the situation is helpless and hopeless. So, inclusive growth has become elusive. All these are due to bad governance. Price rise is another fault line of governance deficit. It is due to misgovernment and mismanagement. The good governance deficiency is due to mainly corruption, coalition compulsion, rusting of the steel frame, political interference, criminalisation of politics and politicisation of crimes, decline in social and moral values, paid media, structural bottlenecks, weakness of PRIs and ineffective adherence to law and rule, non-computerisation and so on.

Corruption has emerged as the key agenda on our national firmament. No doubt it is global phenomena. It has engulfed each and every section of our society whether politicians, civil servants, judiciary, army, media, NGOs, corporate sectors, academicians etc. So, it is here, there and everywhere. Certainly it has become a way of life- leading to scam and mega scam. It puts strong spoke in the running of good governance.

Secondly, India has entered into the era of coalition politics. The compulsion of coalition politics has hampered good governance by the threat of pull out leading to instability. The recent controversy over Pension Bill, FDI, Lokpal etc. are some of the examples. We have to learn to run the coalition with compromise, consensus and conciliation.

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Thirdly, the bureaucracy is the tool for effective and efficient implementation of any policy and decision. Besides, it facilitates legislation or decision through delegated legislation. The Indian bureaucracy has been rated as the 'worst in Asia'. It has been said in a report prepared by a well known consulting farm, namely, Political and Economic Risk Consultancy Ltd. based in Singapore. India gets a near rock bottom rating 9.21 out of 10 points, performing worst than its counterparts in Vietnam (8.54), Indonesia (8.37), Phillipines (7.75) and China (7.11). Singapore remained the best with a rating of 2.25 followed by Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and Malaysia. The Red tape or delay is single most important element of non-performance. Delay the decision is to deny the decision. Besides, the transfer and posting are used as a stick to keep civil servants obedient. The good governance eroded due to this very factor.

Fourthly, the politicians are in habits of running the government on whims by curbing laws, rules and regulations in order to help and favour their own men, especially who had help them in time of election. This leads to undue and unwarranted interference in the day to day administration greatly hampering the good governance. In recent days we have new element in our political system that is criminalisation of politics and politicisation of crimes. Previously, we had dedicated bunch of politicians for national cause. But these days they have become rare species. They are more for power and perks. They take help of criminals to win election and then to maintain their hegemony in the area. Now criminals have moved from periphery to the centre stage in order to grab the political power and authority for themselves.

Fifthly, our constitution guarantees freedom of expression and speech. So we have free medias- both electronic and print. They are strong pillars of democracy. Investigative journalism in India is of world class. But 'Yellow journalism' and 'Paid News' are like spanner in the field of good governance. In fact the fourth Estate must shape the national agenda with responsibility.

Sixthly, we are not only behind in health sector but also in educational field –from school level to the higher education. At the top level our universities are yet to figure in list of top ten best universities of the world. Only few figures among the hundred. We are striving hard to develop knowledge hubs. Some of the initiatives as opening of more technical colleges are in the right direction. But unfortunately, our march in the field of science is lagging and declining, and the nation has been overtaken by countries like China. The enrolment in higher education is 16.23 percent in India, while in China it is 24.35 percent. The expenditure done by China on R&D is 1.4 percent of GDP while in India it is 0.9 percent.

Lastly, the situation is very grave and grim at grass root level. The chaos and confusion reigns supreme at Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) level. The structural bottlenecks, rampant corruption on mega scale, apathy of state level politicians due to rivalry to emerging local leaders of new breed, lack of funds, functions and functionaries, bureaucratic lackadaisical attitude etc mar and minimise the governance at gram panchayat level.

Concluding Remarks:

Thus, in order to obtain desired results in the field of development we have to do away with all incoherence and incompetence in the field of good governance. We must remove all the bottlenecks mentioned above. For this, not only strong, viable and vital super structures are needed but strong dedicated actors are also required. With active and aggressive people's participation, complete and coherent decentralisation of powers, responsible and responsive administration, determined and dedicated political will, democratisation with a spirit of compromise and consensus, requisite amount of accountability and transparency, we can embrace and embark on efficient and effective good governance which is critical and crucial for any vibrant and dynamic political system. Further, the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been regarded as one of the requisites for good governance. The advancement in ICT can be utilised for providing accurate, timely, relevant and quick information for the latest development in knowledge and also about government programmes to the people. So we should embark of promoting ICT and computer knowledge in a large scale.

Moreover, Strong institutional reforms supported and accompanied by effective laws discarding archaic ones are the urgent need of the time. Like, RTI, RTE, MGNREGA, we require strong Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, Food Security Act, Women's Reservation Act, Protection of Whistle-blower Act, Citizens Charter Act etc for the deepening of democracy in India. The proper mechanism to involve common men in decision making process is not yet developed. Although the panchayat raj system to a large extent provides a forum for participation

of common men but it is still required to be strengthened to be representative in nature.

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