AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF INDIA'S EFFORTS TO ENSURE GOOD GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

The relationship quality between the citizens and government defines the whole concept of good governance. In contemporary times citizen's satisfaction is of more importance so citizen centric administration has gained focus to ensure good governance and it has become necessary for vibrant democracy. Lack of good governance can lead to corruption, nepotism and undermining the rights of weaker sections and minorities.

A series of initiatives have been taken by Government of India to achieve the goal of good governance. This article compiles such initiatives and tries to analyse it. These initiatives have been taken from various secondary sources (books, journals, government websites, reports, articles). The article is divided into three parts. First gives the introduction, second analyses the various good governance initiatives, resulting in citizen centric administration which allows the citizens to move closer to the administration and the last part gives the conclusion.

KEYWORDS: *Good Governance, Initiatives, E-Governance, Governance.*

INTRODUCTION

Governance can be regarded as an art of collective decision making process through which any state is governed. The concept of governance has experienced change from the time of industrial revolution to the emergence of modern democracies. The concept has shifted its emphasis from supervisory administration to a more progressive citizen-centric system (Sharma & Sharma, 2010). In contemporary public management and public policy discourses, governance certainly encompasses a reasonably essential place (Asaduzzaman & Virtanen, 2016). The effectiveness of the system that suits to the wants, aspirations, background and ethos of the people concerned is the essential preconditions of quality governance. Those selected for operating the system of governance should be gifted with character and proficiency so that they can be motivated towards public service (Kashyap, 2010). It can be recognised as good when political leaders exercise their power of authority for the welfare of the citizens of their country (Shukla, 2010).

Since ancient times, good governance has been conceptualised as an epitome or Ram Rajya. In a democratic structure it is accompanied with proficient and operational administration. As such, administration should be growth oriented and dedicated towards citizens (Vayunandan, 2003). Kautilya also discusses the subsequent ten essentials of good governance for a king (Sharmasastry, 1929)

- Merge his distinctiveness with his duties

- Guide administration

- Avoid excesses without missing the objective

- Lead a disciplined life with a code of conduct

- Pay stable salaries and allowances

- Preserve law and order

- Stress on lekhaks (writers)

- Carry out precautionary measures against corrupt administrators

- Replace immoral ministers by virtuous ones

- Emulate executive qualities

In 1990's World Bank has specified good governance as a way of governance which is concentrated on rule of law, transparency, accountability, inclusiveness and efficiency(Shukla, 2010).Since, citizens occupy a fundamental place in governance so a citizen friendly and accountable administration is usually the main focus of every government(Ministry of Personnel, 2015). Following are certain preconditions for citizen centric administration that has been included within the twelfth report of Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) titled 'Citizen Centric Administration- Heart of Governance':-

a. Comprehensive Legal structure

b. For effective functioning and appropriate execution of laws strong institutional mechanism is required.

c. Exhaustive personnel management policies and Proficient personnel recruitment

d. Accurate policies for devolution, delegation and answerability

Goal number sixteen of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda 2015 visibly recognises the importance of good governance. It focusses on importance of effective governance institutions and systems that will be responsible for delivering of public services and will result in promoting comprehensive development. The main focus is to develop such kind of institutions which are effective, responsible and transparent. These characteristics in any institutions are a symbol of good governance. To accomplish SDGs one of the parameter that needs an urgent attention in the field of innovation i.e. the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). This innovation has opened the doors of new forms of commitment amongst citizens, government and the private sectors.(Dhaoui, 2019).

The relationship quality between the citizens and government defines the whole concept of good governance. As this relationship defines that for whom the government exists to 'serve' and 'protect', i.e. 'the citizens'. (Goel D. S., 2007). In contemporary times citizen's satisfaction is of more importance so nowadays citizen centric administration has gained focus to ensure good governance at local, state or national level, instead of traditional state (Citizen Centric Administration- The Heart of Governance, 2009). If there is an absence of good governance then the system will predominantly harm the 'corrective intervention' role of government(Bank, 1992). So as a result citizen centric good governance is necessary for vibrant democracy. Also the lack of citizen centric governance can lead to corruption, nepotism and undermining the rights of weaker sections and minorities.

A series of steps have been initiated to achieve the goal of good governance. For example various procedures have been simplified, various laws or rules that have become redundant have been identified and repealed, time has been abridged for filling up of various forms, digital technology has been used to bring in transparency in various public services, submitting of affidavits for small level executive jobs have been abolished, allowing of self-certification of our own certificates and building up of strong public grievance redressal mechanism etc. Government of India has tried to lessen the number of layers involved in the decision making process to the minimum so that information can reach the targeted citizens easily (Ministry of Personnel, 2015).

This article conceptually defines good governance, analysis various good governance initiatives like establishment of central vigilance commission, adoption of citizen charters, right to information act, right to service act etc. That are initiated to ensure citizen-centric friendly administration. These initiatives have been taken from various secondary sources (books, journals, government websites, reports, articles). The article is divided into three parts. First gives the introduction, second analyses the good governance initiatives, resulting in citizen centric administration which allows the citizens to move closer to the administration and the last part gives the conclusion.

ANALYSIS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES

Various governments in India has initiated number of reforms which has resulted in bringing the people of the country closer to the administration. These reforms have taken place not only at the national level but also at the local level. Some of the good governance initiatives taken by the government of India are:-

Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)

To curb corruption (Vision and Mission | Central Vigilance Commission | Government of India, n.d.) in the country CVC was created in 1964 on the recommendations of the Santhanam Committee. The institution of CVC is made up of one chairperson and not more than two vigilance commissioners. CVC has helped in preventing leakages in the administration which has ultimately resulted in increasing accessibility of administrative functions by the citizens(Central Vigilance Commission).This institution has dealt with five characteristics of good governance that is transparency, responsiveness, efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. At the state level also similar organisational structure has been set up with the name of state vigilance commission.

In the era of internet, complaints to CVC can be made through an email also. In 2017, the annual report submitted by CVC in Parliament claimed that the number of complaints received by it was reduced. The reason which CVC gave behind this was that various complaints were vague and unverifiable (Joseph, 2018). CVC also claimed that it has reduced duplication of complaints. But reduced number of complaints may also be an indication of losing of trust on this institution by the citizens. Though CVC has set an example of citizen centric administration as it takes complaints from the citizens regarding corruption and take actions on it and by reducing corruption it has contributed in good governance yet CVC as an institution has failed to meet its objectives. There is a need for lot of reforms in this institution so that trust can be built again among the citizens.

Citizens' Charters

Citizens' Charters are purely replications of the idea that the citizens are the "King" and government institutions exist not to rule but to serve the citizens (Citizen Centric Administration-The Heart of Governance, 2009). This document states the day-to-day functioning of any organisation. It lists out all the contracts which the organization has with the citizens of the country (Kumar, 2016). Once it is declared then the organization can be held responsible if the services are not delivered to the citizens. With the aim of including participation, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness, efficiency and accountability as the characteristics of good governance Government of India in 1996 started the exercise to frame citizens' charters. The analysis of various citizen charters has brought out the following:

• Reckonable standards of delivery are scarcely brought out.

• Since standards of delivery are scarcely defined, it becomes hard to measure whether the desired level of service has been attained or not.

• Even if the standards of service are specified, there is no mechanism to ensure that these standards of service are actually met. If these standards of service are not met then there are no provisions for compensation to the citizens available in the charter.

• There is no provision for regular updating of charters so as to meet the expectations of the citizens on the one hand and the organizational knowledge on the other with changing times.

• The local branches of the parent organisation have the compulsion of partaking same charter as the parent organisation. This generally overlooks the local issues which should be included in the charter so as to meet the requirements of the local citizens. (Citizen Centric Administration- The Heart of Governance, 2009).

Various reports have suggested that initiatives like citizen charters which aimed at building the administration transparent, responsible, open and responsive acted as a 'toothless tiger'. For instance in 2008 a review of Citizen Charters was done by Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi. In this review they found that many charters were non-existent or outdated, lacked precision on standards, commitments and mechanisms (Pandey, 2019).

Right to Information (RTI) ACT, 2005

RTI Act came as the game changer in 2005 where it provided the citizens with the facility of accessibility of information of any public policies which they deserve. This act not only improved transparency and accountability of the government but also helped in strengthening democratic nature of the country. Transparency characteristic of RTI Act has facilitated various government organisations to function more precisely, surely and has also empowered citizens to contribute in the governance process proficiently (Citizen Centric Administration- The Heart of Governance, 2009).This ultimately leads to lessening of corrupt practices and increase people's involvement and will result in good governance (Goel D. S., 2007). Undoubtedly, the act includes features of good governance, of which the major components that have been recognised in the act are: Citizens must be informed as learned citizenry will ultimately encourage people's participation in development process, transparency, accountability and lessening of corrupt practices. All these considerations are important   fundamentals of good governance, which will entail full responsibility to stakeholders. As these stakeholders are partners in the development process and they have the powers to implement accepted policies, public customs and recognised standards (Ansari & George, 2010).

This Act is responsible for checking the abuse of the discretionary powers of administrative authorities. But it also suffers from various drawbacks which weakens the position of the right to information for example Section 2(h) has defined the term 'public authority' but it does not provides the exact meaning of public authorities. It includes certain NGOs which are funded by the government either directly or indirectly but there are some NGOs which are funded by the public then the question arises that whether these NGOs falls within the category of public authorities or not (Goel, 2019). Section 4 of the RTI Act has provided us with the provision of suo motu disclosure of a lot of information by each public authority. Nonetheless, such disclosureshave remained very less (Sabharwal, 2018). The evolution of this act was not either smoother or simple. There are still public authorities with embedded mind-set of denial of information. The bureaucracy always tries to justify that the information asked by the citizen is either a third party information or the information contains elements of officials secret. This ultimately distort the very existence of this act and results in delay of full enactment of the provisions of the act. So, overall the implementation of the RTI Act can be seen as a success and can be regarded as indeed one of the marvellous legislative achievement in the democratic progression of the Indian State as it has empowered the citizens by providing them information (Goel D. S., 2007).

Sevottam Model

Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DARPG), Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions established the sevottam model in 2006. This model aimed at providing quality service delivery to the citizens by the government organisations. There are three components in this model. The first component focusses on effective charter enactment which results in opening up a channel. This channel will allow the citizens to share their inputs so that the concerned organisation can determine   service delivery requirements. The second component, aims at establishing a robust Public Grievance Redressal mechanism that should function in a way to provide proper satisfaction to the citizens. Citizens are more interested in how the organisation reacts to their complaints irrespective of the final decision. The third

component focusses on providing excellent service delivery system to the citizens. It imagines that an organisation can deliver excellent services if it accomplishes the key ingredients for good service delivery well and builds its own ability to progress delivery incessantly(Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, n.d.). This model involves various characteristics of good governance such as transparency, responsiveness, accountability, efficiency, effectiveness and rule of law.

Social Audit

Social Audit is that good governance initiative of GOI which reduces corruption, increases accountability and transparency and strengthens the Gram Sabha by providing them voice. Social audit refers to the involvement of all the stakeholders in measuring the achievement of objectives pertaining to the development goals. The process of social audit leads to social engagement, transparency, communication and accountability of the decision makers (Citizen Centric Administration- The Heart of Governance, 2009). In this the audit is concerned with matching real outcomes with intended outcomes and ensures social accountability. But still there are loopholes. According to one of the CAG report many states Social Audit Units (SAUs) doesn't seek record from Gram Panchayats regarding execution of works and expenditure which hampers the transparency, participation, efficiency, effectiveness, equity building, responsiveness and accountability which are fundamental characteristics of good governance. There is also lack of awareness among the Gram Sabha about their rights with regard to social audit.

Right to Public Services/Right to Service Act-

Right to Service (RTS) Act tries to curb corruption in the administration by ensuring time bound delivery of services to the citizens. It provides mechanism for punishing the delinquent public servant who fails to provide the services to the citizens on time. Madhya Pradesh became the first state to enact RTS Act in 2010. One of the core components of the Public Services Guarantees Act is the robust grievance redressal mechanism. Therefore, every state has included it as part of their legislation. However, there is variation in the structures and functions of the grievance redressal mechanisms of different states. Main characteristics of RTS Act are accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness, efficiency, participation and rule of law. But still there is lack of awareness among the citizens about the RTS Act and in most of the cases the public servant fails to provide the services on time. Also, most of the state acts are in essence mostly punishment-centric, the intention should be not to penalise the government servants, but to sensitise the public servants towards their duty, towards the citizens and to enhance and imbibe in them a culture to deliver services promptly (Pandey, 2019).

Lokpal and Lokayukta

The institution of Lokpal has been recommended by the first Administrative Reforms Commission. It aimed at providing citizens with clean governance (Lokpal of India, n.d.). The concept of anti-corruption institution came fifty years ago. The Lokpal Bill was introduced in the Parliament several times but due to various reasons the bill was not converted into law (Citizen Centric Administration- The Heart of Governance, 2009). It was finally legislated as a law in 2013, and came into effect in January 2014 (Lokpal of India, n.d.). Lastly in 2019, India got its first Lokpal in the name of Justice Pinaki Ghose. The Lawgot President's assent six years before

but till now the Lokpal has not been able to play a significant role in curbing corruption. The current Lokpal institution has not appointed the Director of Prosecution (Johri & Bhardwaj, 2020). On March 2, 2020 Lokpal rules were notified i.e. a year after the appointment of first Lokpal. It stated that the complaint against the sitting or former PM would be heard by a full bench at the admission stage itself to decide whether an inquiry should be heard or not. Importantly, if a complaint is dismissed at the inquiry stage, no reason is to be given for rejection and also records of the inquiry not to be put into public domain. Here comes the flaw in the law as the reasons are not disclosed for the rejection so the petitioner will not be able to file an appeal in the SC to pursue his complaint. India is still far from adopting a national policy on the eradication of corruption (Godbole, 2020).

CONCLUSION

We can conclude that good governance acts as a fundamental element that is required in the progress of any country and it is an important step that leads towards simplification of procedures or rules in the government. Governance in India is undergoing transformation as it is being made simple, fast, flexible and effective by applications of new innovations and technology. This has led to participative governance and citizen centric administration. The various administrative innovations has not only reduced the human interface but also has enhanced their experience by providing them various opportunities. Digital Empowerment has helped in promoting Minimum Government and Maximum Governance. Provision of online citizen centric services has ensured transparency and accountability in governance. From all the initiatives mentioned above the ultimate aim of building trust with the citizens of the country through effective and speedy redressal of grievances have been somewhat achieved. But India is also facing the challenge of digital divide. There are people who do not know how to handle the technology as well they are also not well equipped with the English language. So to increase the access of these initiatives, government should provide training to the rural people on how to handle the technology in their local language. Nandan Nilenkani Panel suggested that National Payments Corporations of India should encourage local language app software for digital payments. Introduction of local languages or various Indian languages will surely increase the accessibility of benefits of efforts of the government.

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