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EDITORIAL OFFICE : Yojana Bhavan, Sansad Marg, New Delhi-110001 Tel.: 23096738, 23042511.
Tlm.: Yojana. Business Manager (Hqrs.): Ph: 24367260, 24365609, 24365610

For new subscriptions, renewals, enquiries please contact: Business Manager (Circulation & Adv.), Publications Division, Min. of I&B, East Block-IV, Level-VII, R.K. Puram, New Delhi-110003 (Ph 24365610) *Hall No.196, Old Secretariat, Delhi-110054 (Ph 23880205) *701, B Wing, 7th Floor, Kendriya Sadan, Belapur, Navi Mumbai 400614 (Ph 27570686)*, Esplanade East, Kolkata-700069 (Ph 22417673) *Press road, Near Govt. Press, Thiruvananthapuram-695001 (Ph 2330650) *Block No.4, 1st Floor, Gruhalokom Complex, M G Road, Nampally, Hyderabad-500001 (Ph 24605383) *1st Floor, ‘F’ Wing, Kendriya Sadan, Karimnagar, Bangalore-560034 (Ph 25537244) *Bihar State Co-operative Bank Building, Ashoka Rajpath, Patna-800004 (Ph 2683407) *Hall No 1, 2nd floor, Kendriya Bhawan, Sector-II, Allaganj, Lucknow-226024 (Ph 2225455) *Ambica Complex, 1st Floor, above UCO Bank, Paldi, Ahmedabad-380007 (Ph 26586699) *KKB Road, New Colony, House No.7, Chemikuthu, Guwahati 781003 (Ph 2665090).

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No. of Pages : 76

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The journey of the concept of Good Governance in modern times has gone through many phases. In the pre-independence period, Gandhiji's vision of good governance essentially meant democratic decentralisation which entailed power to the Gram Panchayats and people at the lowest level of political hierarchy. By the early 1990s, however, the idea of good governance had turned into a metaphor of donor-conditionality for the debt-ridden countries of Asia and Africa. It was often blamed for social unrest and political upheaval in many parts of the world. But freed from the element of coercion and external force, the concept retained a certain attraction spurring a number of policy initiatives based on the demand for participatory development, transparency in decision making and empowerment of people to decide and shape their destiny.

It would be good to bear in mind that governance refers to the interaction between government and other actors of the social sphere and the process of decision making in a complex world. Important though it is, the idea of governance need not be restricted only to the government. It is to be seen as a part of the complex matrix of relationship between the political and administrative structure and the society in the process of decision making, implementation and accountability.

The core values that go into the making of good governance are participatory decision-making, accountability and transparency, efficient and responsive structure underlying the political system and equity which involves fairness and rule of law. A society striving to achieve the ideals of good governance needs to work on these values to ensure that people get their rightful share in the fruits of development of the country. A number of initiatives have been taken in this direction which are having a significant impact on the lives of people and their relationship with the structures of governance.

The Right to Information (RTI) Act has been a powerful instrument in the hands of people to ensure transparency in the decision making process. There are a number of cases where this right has been used by the people to get better civic facilities, cut down red-tape and delay in decision making and punish the corrupt. State governments have taken steps to come out with a public service charter that fixes time limit to the government departments for providing services to the people. This is expected to address a number of grievances of people arising from delayed delivery of public services which often lies at the root of corruption and inefficiency.

The information architecture of the administrative and political set up plays a crucial role in making governance answerable and responsive to the people. E-governance initiatives are among the other sets of measures which is transforming the way the government functions and relates to the citizens. Models of e-governance being implemented in many parts of the country seek to answer this issue. While information dissemination at a wider scale remains important, these models have tried to leverage the advantages of ICT to channelise information of critical importance to the targeted audience to engender change. It is also proving helpful in inducing people into desirable action from the public policy point of view.

It is indeed true that exclusion of large segments of people from decision making process results in unresponsive governance and gives rise to an exploitative system. The Panchayati Raj Institution is now an essential forum for direct and participatory governance at the village level. Reservation in these institutions has empowered women and it is bound to dent political and social discrimination suffered by women and break the monopoly of still dominant paradigm of patriarchy in society.

Good governance is a dynamic concept. It has many facets and a detailed discussion of the related aspects are contained in the pages of this issue of Yojana. But it would be worthwhile to reiterate that governance is not only the concern of the government. A constant and critical dialogue between the government and society is essential to refine and effectively put to practice the principles of good governance.

Yojana wishes its readers a Happy New Year.
The Challenge of Good Governance in India: Need for Innovative Approaches

Balmiki Prasad Singh

P A N D I T J A W A H A R L A L Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, in his famous Tryst with Destiny speech of 15th August 1947 succinctly put the task before people's representatives and the services in the following words; “….. to fight and end poverty and ignorance and disease; to build up a prosperous, democratic and progressive nation, and to create social, economic and political institutions which will ensure justice and fullness of life to every man and woman.” These works are still in progress. A deeper look at these tasks would clearly establish that these goals are entirely within the realm of governance.

Meaning

There is no accepted definition of governance. There is divergence of opinion about the meaning of governance between the conservatives and the liberals, between socialists and the communists.

In recent years the word governance has become a very fashionable term and is being used in a variety of ways and that covers a large number of organizations both in public and private domains.

For our purposes, however, we are confining governance only to public domain. We are concerned here with that form of governance which serves the citizens by safeguarding territorial integrity of the State and securing individual security, rule of law and the delivery of services ranging from education, health to livelihood and food security.

Context

No theory of governance would be intelligible unless it is seen in the context of its time. In the beginning of the 21st century, it has become evident that those who want minimal government are having an upper hand against the advocates of the paternalist welfare state.

An efficient, effective and democratic government is the best guarantor of social justice as well as an orderly society. Similarly, there is also emphasis on the fact that the administrative system has
to be country specific and area specific taking in view not only the institutions of governance and its legal and regulatory mechanisms but also its market, its civil society and cultural values of the people. The principal response of the state, therefore, would be to facilitate, to enable, and to coordinate. Neither the market nor the civil society can perform this role as effectively as the government and thus they cannot become substitutes for the government.

India is not excluded from this global debate or transition from socialist order to capitalist growth models. Fortunately, the Indian State does not have the monopoly of the public sphere. The civil society is increasingly more concerned with public sphere issues and government intervention is considered necessary to provide welfare schemes to cover social safety needs, upgrade health-care to protect children, and help provide opportunities for women and the minorities.

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 suffering of the common man.

**National Values**

The concept of governance was decisively shaped by the freedom movement led by Mahatma Gandhi and the aspirations of founding fathers of the Constitution. The values in the Indian context at the time of the inauguration of the Republic were those of nationalism, democracy, secularism, non-alignment and mixed economy.

The meaning of nationalism today relates more to further strengthening of a trillion dollar gross domestic product economy and less to cohesion among states or integration of princely order that Sardar Patel so magnificently accomplished.

Another historic decision was taken to make India a secular state. Religion always had a major place in our private lives. Politicisation of religious, ethnic and caste ties have reached unprecedented levels. Today communal and sectarian approaches are more prominent in our polity and also in public policy at national and state levels.

For the last sixty years, our ideological frame of reference was determined by public choice. It is another matter that it was not always real. Since 1991 we have slowly moved towards the capitalist path.

Democracy is at the heart of governance in India. However, in its working, democracy has revealed several inadequacies. The chain of accountability from the civil service to legislature and political authority is weak; follow-through at higher levels of administration is poor; and limited oversight by Parliamentary committees is part of the problem. Criminalisation of politics and increasing role of caste and religion in electoral politics are major concerns.

In the initial years of the Republic, the executive functioned with considerable autonomy. The hold of politicians and specially ministers began with demands for allocation of scarce resources in favour of ruling elites and powerful interest groups. The ‘neutrality’ of the civil service came under stress with ministerial instability since 1960s in the states. The fragmentation of the authority at centre characterised by coalition governments since the late 1980s has only deepened and extended this process.

But election after election common people are asserting their voice, changing their representatives in a manner that has ensured change in government in the states and also at the Centre. This phenomenon supported by the civil society groups, the media and an active judiciary has ushered in demands for accountability of the executive.

Democracy has really moved beyond periodic elections towards ‘good’ governance.

**Good Governance**

Citizens all the world over look up to the nation-state and its organs for high quality performance. It is necessary that citizens are allowed to participate freely, openly and fully in the political process. Good governance is associated with accountable political leadership, enlightened policy-making and a civil service imbued with a professional ethos. The presence of a strong civil society including a free press and independent judiciary are pre-conditions for good governance.

What is ‘good’ governance in the Indian context? The central challenge before good governance relates to social development. In his famous ‘tryst with destiny’ speech
on 14 August 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru articulated this challenge as 'the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunities'. Good governance must aim at expansion in social opportunities and removal of poverty. In short, good governance, as I perceive it, means securing justice, empowerment, employment and efficient delivery of services.

Securing Justice

There are several inter-related aspects of securing justice including security of life and property, access to justice, and rule of law.

Threats to Peace

The most important public good is the ensurance of security especially security of life and property. The Indian nation-state is aware of complexities of the situation and the need is to show greater determination and be relentless in support to its instruments of law and forces of democracy and social cohesion to defeat the elements of terror, insurgency and naxalite violence.

Access to Justice

Access to justice is based upon the basic principle that people should be able to rely upon the correct application of law. In actual practice there are several countervailing factors. Some citizens do not know their rights and cannot afford legal aid to advocate on their behalf. The most severe challenge relates to complexity of adjudication as legal proceedings are lengthy and costly and the judiciary lacks personnel and logistics to deal with these matters. Systematic solutions are, therefore, needed for strengthening access to justice. At the same time ad hoc measures are required to provide immediate assistance to the needy citizens.

Rule of Law

The concept of good governance is undoubtedly linked with the citizens’ right of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. This could be secured in a democracy only through the rule of law.

The rule of law is expressed through the axiom that no one is above the law. One has to clearly understand that the rule ‘of’ law is different from the rule ‘by’ law. Under the rule ‘by’ law, law is an instrument of the government and the government is above the law while under the rule ‘of’ law no one is above the law not even the government. It is under this framework that rule of law not only guarantees the liberty of the citizens but it also limits the arbitrariness of the government and thereby it makes government more articulate in decision-making. The rule of law as Dicey postulated is equality before law. This is secured through formal and procedural justice which makes independent judiciary a very vital instrument of governance.

In our constitutional system, every person is entitled to equality before law and equal protection under the law. No person can be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to the procedure established by law. Thus the state is bound to protect the life and liberty of every human being. The courts have the final authority to test any administrative action on the standard of legality. The administrative or executive action that does not meet the standard of legality will be set aside if the aggrieved person brings an appropriate petition in the competent court.

A necessary corollary of this phenomenon is called ‘judicial activism’. A large number of Public Interest Litigations (PILs) are filed in High Courts and the Supreme Court against the apathy of the executive. This has served us admirably but it has also highlighted the need for circumspection and self-restraint on the part of the judges in performance of this task.

Another matter of significance in the context of good governance relates to the fact that there are virtues of ‘judicial creativity’ but this phenomenon must not stifle ‘executive creativity’ particularly of officials working at grassroots level for they are in day-to-day contact with citizens and interact with them in myriad ways.

Empowerment

An empowering approach to poverty reduction needs to be based on the conviction that poor people have to be both the object of development programmes and principal agency for development.

Our experience shows that when poor people are associated with public programmes, they have consistently demonstrated their intelligence and competence in using public funds wisely and effectively.

Our Constitution is committed to two different set of principles that have a decisive bearing on equality. First, is the principle of equal opportunities to all and the second, the principle of
redress of educational and social backwardness. The question is, not only of the extent to which reservation in Government employment can really change things for the better, but how it could be used, in order to benefit the socially, educationally and economically backward ones.

In providing protectionist regulations in government employment, no special care was taken for the poor students since the Constitution only recognized “educational and social backwardness” and not economic backwardness as a norm to be applied in formulation of preferential policies in government employment.

The Supreme Court in a landmark Judgment (Indira Sawhney & Others Vs. Union of India and Others) delivered on 16.11.1992, while upholding the reservation of 27 percent of vacancies in the civil posts and services in the Government of India in favour of other backward classes (OBCs), provided for exclusion of socially advanced persons/sections among them commonly known as “the creamy layer”. The Supreme Court further directed the Government of India to specify socio-economic criteria for exclusion of “the creamy layer” from the OBCs. Subsequently, the children of persons holding eminent positions in Government and also of rich farming families were made ineligible from reservation in services. Recently, the Government of India has stipulated that sons and daughters of persons having gross annual income of Rs. 2.5 lakhs per annum and above would be excluded from reservation of services.

In the scheme of affirmative action that the Constitution provides, the State has been authorized to make special provision not only for the advancement of socially and educationally backward classes of citizens, for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes but also for women and children. Significant measures have been taken in this regard during the last sixty years. One such step relates to reservation of seats for women in local bodies.

Today India has 3.3 million elected representatives in Panchayats in nearly half a million villages out of whom over one million are women. Direct elections have also brought into the village national life and consciousness about strengths of democracy and the need for democratic behaviour in terms of the Constitution of India. The print and electronic media in particular have strengthened this process.

Employment

*Generation of gainful* employment for the youth is the most challenging task facing India’s political economy.

The need is to prepare the youth with such education that would help them acquire vocational skills and mastery over new technology, including internet. This would make the youth employable in the job-market and also help those who want to work on their own.

In addition, there is an imperative requirement to pay special attention to generation of employment opportunities in agriculture, expand area of coverage of rural employment guarantee schemes, and accelerate the pace of implementation of Bharat Nirman schemes and several other programmes. Similarly, it would be essential to encourage private sector partnership and support movement of self-help groups and micro-financing institutions.

**Employment & Regional Diversity**

We are at a level of economic development where India’s southern and western states have enormously developed in economic and educational terms while the northern and eastern states are lagging behind. The level of frustration on account of this disparity is becoming evident in the spread of naxalism and insurgency. It is true that the nation-state is deeply concerned about this phenomenon but it is only through the quality of governance in northern and eastern states combined with high level of investment that regional disparity could be bridged. Generation of employment among the youth in rural areas in northern and eastern States could be the catalyst.

**Delivery of Services**

The principal feature of the scheme of effective delivery of services needs to be seen in the context of the fact that demands have to flow from the bottom up and not the top down.

The three institutions which have played remarkable roles in improving public service delivery in India are: (i) the judiciary; (ii) the media; and (iii) the civil society.

The independent character of the judiciary that the constitutional architecture has carefully provided for has been of immense help. The judiciary has intervened...
meaningfully to correct failures in service delivery by the executive. Public Interest Litigation (PIL) has emerged as a powerful tool in the hands of individuals as well as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

The media, both electronic and print, have emerged as a source of pressure for change. It has brought to the fore aspirations of the common people, which in turn has exerted enormous pressure on public officials to deliver goods.

The emergence of a large number of non-governmental organizations in different fields ranging from environment to culture to education has become instrumental in bringing forward the concerns of the public with a degree of regularity.

Administrative Responses

The Indian administrative scene is marked by few successful innovations and practices in public service delivery and a large number of pathetic performances.

The general weakness of accountability mechanisms is an impediment to improving services across the board. The lack of transparency and secrecy that have been associated with the administrative system from colonial times, besides generating corruption, has also led to injustice and favouritism.

My own experience has shown that when the political leadership granted key civil servants direct access, it was possible to resolve issues that might have got complicated due to factional interest of political leaders at the grass-root levels or through conflicting circulars of the State Government.

Public signaling of support by the state leadership always helps civil servants reach the poor people by ignoring political interferences that are aimed at securing individuals or group interests of comparatively better off people in the society.

The message is clear that when properly empowered by political leadership, a Project Director or a District Magistrate can be transformed into an effective instrument not only for innovation in service delivery but also for its quality and delivery on time.

Capacity Building

Capacity building at all levels of an organization is widely perceived as the most important approach to achieve quality of services and customer’s satisfaction.

In a federal democracy, decentralization of power is viewed as necessary to empower people in rural and urban areas to improve their lot. The empowerment of the local levels of administration would foster confidence and enable more individuals even outside the bureaucracy to come forward to handle community needs and enhance public good effectively without hesitation or the need of approval by higher level authorities.

The most crucial element in capacity building is leadership. Good leadership aimed at improvement of organizational culture is integral to capacity building. Capacity building demands staff to behave responsibly and produce desired and agreed upon results. It means a collegiate effort in which an individual or an organization could be made accountable and responsible for any action that they take. Access to information, participation, innovation and accountability are needed to build an environment for capacity building.

Other 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.

Criminalisation 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.

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. It is necessary 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.

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.

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.

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. 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 centre of governance architecture. It creates opportunities, sustains leadership and generates hope. 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.

The shift in national values corresponded with new democratic experiences and change in regional and global environment. 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 policy 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 flavor.

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. 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.

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 can not 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.

A multi-sectoral 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, womens’ groups, legal assistance organizations and several other civil society instruments can play an influential role. 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.

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, licence, 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.

**Concluding Remarks**

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.

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.

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.

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 representation 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 upgradation of such skills would lead to harmonious relationships with nature.

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.

As regards the Services, my main worry is that the premier services in the country namely: the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and the Indian Police Service (IPS) which play a crucial role in the system of governance including in the district administration are fast losing trust of the common people. It is not only for the government but for the services as well to look into these aspects of the matter as in the absence of trust between the civil service and the common people nothing substantial can be accomplished.

Fortunately, innovations are taking place in the government, in the market and in the civil society. 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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**DO YOU KNOW?**

**What are Non Performing Assets?**

Non Performing Assets (NPAs) are the debts for which the bank has not received any interest or principal repayment for an extended period of time. Since no income accrues to the lending institution from these debts, these are classified as NPAs. We can say that NPA refers to loans that are in jeopardy of default.

If a loan instalment is not paid to a bank or financial institution for three months continuously, it is considered NPA and the bank records it as NPA in its book of accounts. NPAs create burden on the financial institutions and hence they are often good indicators of the health of a financial institution.

**What is Digital Signature?**

The digital counterpart of the handwritten signature is Digital Signature. Just as a paper document is authenticated with handwritten signature, digital signature authenticates the identity of the owner of the document in the digital world. It gives the assurance about the sender of the document as also the fact that the document has not been altered. Digital Signature is a kind of stamp which is very difficult to duplicate and forge. The Information Technology Act, 2000 requires the use of Digital Signatures to ensure security and authenticity of all electronically filed documents.

Digital Signature certificates (DSC) can be purchased from Certification Agencies (CAs) approved by the Controller of Certifying Authorities. Currently MTNL CA, TCS, IDBRT, Safetycrypt (Satyam), nCode Solutions, NIC, and e-Mudhra are the authorised Certification Agencies for individuals in India. The Digital Signature Certificates (DSCs) generally have a validity of one year or two years and are legally admissible in a court of law.

**What does the PAN Number represent?**

Permanent Account Number (PAN) is a ten digit Alpha-numeric number issued by the Income Tax department. The purpose of allotting PAN is to link financial transactions of an individual or firm with the Income Tax department. PAN facilitates linking of the various documents such as Income Tax Return, Tax Deduction at Source (TDS), Tax Arrears and Refund to an individual and acts as an identifier. It is an important mechanism to check tax evasion and to broaden the tax base.

However, the ten Alpha-numeric digits of the PAN have a specific meaning. We can take a sample PAN and find out what various digits and numbers stand for:

First three characters - Alphabetic series running from AAA to ZZZ which is randomly allocated.; Fourth Character- Status of the PAN-holder. Here, P stands for Individual, F stands for Firm, C stands for Company, H stands for HUF, T stands for Trust etc.; Fifth Character- It is the first letter of the surname of the PAN holder. If a person changes the surname after marriage or for any other reason, the PAN does not change.; Sixth to ninth Character- These are sequential numbers running from 0001 to 9999. This is also allocated randomly.; Tenth Character- It is the alphabetic check digit which is generated by applying a formula to the preceding nine numbers and digits.

**What is Cheque Truncation & How it works?**

Cheque Truncation System (CTS) is used by the banks to stop the movement of a physical cheque from the bank where it is presented to the bank which had issued it. Under this system, an electronic image of the cheque is transmitted to the drawee branch along with the necessary information inputs like Magnetic Ink Character Recognition (MICR) code, date of presentation and details of the bank presenting the cheque.

The new system of Cheque Truncation will cut the time that was earlier consumed in the physical movement of cheques from presenting branch to the drawee branch. At present, the outstation cheques take around seven days to get cleared. Once the system is in force in the whole country, it will take one or two days to clear a cheque. The settlement cycles of the bank will also be drastically reduced. There will be no fear of loss or damage to the cheque in physical transfer. Alteration in cheque is not accepted in this system.
INDIA, USED to the experience of the freedom movement and the post independence decades, with “high commands”, “saintly idioms”, “satyagraha” modes and “idealistic” goals, is not coming to grips with the operational and functioning aspects of coalition governments and decentralised institutions. There is an atmosphere of unease and unanswered questions. As far as the basics are concerned:

- As the State withdraws from direct delivery governance would need to establish a regulatory framework for the functioning of the economic and social sectors; and also lay down the institutional framework, the incentive and disincentive mechanisms and fiscal structures for civil society institutions to function, like decentralised, local institutions of Government, Cooperatives, NGO’s and newer ‘mixed’ forms of similar organisations.
- Non-renewable resource scarcities will be far more severe particularly of resources, like water, quality land, and energy and sustainability concerns will be acute.
- There will be a much greater emphasis on the rights of individuals and groups, including participatory forms of decision making. This in turn will demand greater fairness and self-restraint in the use of Government Power. Related to it will be demands on transparency and right to information.
- There will be the demand for protecting vulnerable groups, either the historically underprivileged, or the victims of marketisation, concerns for human rights and particularly of specific groups such as women, children, the minorities, the adivasis, the mentally and physically challenged.
- On the flip side modern technology will be seen as providing cutting edge knowledge based solutions to emerging scarcities or problems, and therefore greater use of information technology, biotechnology, systems

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networking, the new materials and strategic management responses.

- Thoughtful groups will see security concerns becoming more acute, arising from socio-economic political dichotomies and resultant tensions as also the more basic issues of energy security, food and water security and institutional dimensions of addressing these.

**Land and Water**

The issues in decentralisation are of another kind. It should remain a matter of priority for State Policy to help those who help themselves in the core areas of local and global concern. As preparations of Twelfth Plan showed, in relation to targets, performance has been well behind in the interrelated areas of land and water. This problem is at the heart of food security and employment and energy sufficiency (see Y.K. Alagh, 2012).

Problems partly arise because the existing legal and administrative systems and financial rules are structured for formal organisations in the public or private corporate sector. So are global financial institutions. Newer kinds of institutions with strategic mixtures of organisational styles, cooperatives and corporates, NGO’s and governments, do not have a level playing field for them. For example a loss making subsidised electricity system can underprice a renewable group and drive it out of the market. The long-term problem is reform in the sense that subsidies and protection given to established groups have to be withdrawn. In the short run the protection given to each group must be the same. These reforms are unpopular. The legislation for Producer Companies in The Companies Act is being subverted on ideological grounds saying that this is not the corporate sector.

The structure or incentive and disincentive systems for this kind of growth, should begin with a taxonomy of complementarities of policy rules at different levels of policy making like, no level can spend more resources than they have access to. But resources, which are short or binding constraints at national or global levels, are elastic at local levels. However, their mobilisation requires policy changes at higher levels. For example, it is easy to buy a tax-free bond of the New York civic bodies, but very little attention has been paid to markets for local bodies bond paper in developing countries and the fiscal reform that has to precede them. An exceptional effort by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation of floating a large bond issue without sovereign guaranties is available as a case study. These issues are important because the State just does not have the money any more. The Twelfth Plan shows that the fiscal deficit as a percentage of GDP of the States is much higher than the sustainable fiscal deficit in most major States with States from whom examples are expected leading the profiligacy and this is arising on top of a substantial decline in public spending on infrastructure in the Eleventh Plan. More of the same is just not on the agenda and arguing for it is quixotic. The situation on public spending is abysmal and to argue for devolution of non existent resources to local bodies is impractical.

Any debt rescheduling strategy will have to do this and it must be linked to restructuring Local Finance. The good schemes of support to local agencies for land, water and urban development in the last three budgets must be linked to local governance structures and finance. Large sums of money are involved here. International agencies are now lending for local schemes. We must study recent global policies and link this with local finance. For example evaluations of projects have to look at the efficacy of different levels of governance in effectiveness of functioning. The reform process has to be fairly deep rooted for widespread land and water based poverty reducing growth processes to take place. This has to be rooted in the administrative and legislative processes.

The Indian economy is growing rapidly and also diversifying. For example the share of agriculture in the labour force has now fallen to around 53 per cent. Again, urbanisation will need to be structured in a fairly decentralised manner. All of this will lead to different challenges in transport, energy, waste disposal and urban planning issues. It has, however to be noted that the urbanisation pattern in India is decentralised. While very small urban settlements are not growing, the share of smaller towns in Class I towns is high, (100,000+). Urbanisation has been explained as the outcome of both centrifugal and centripetal forces. While the urban growth rate in the eighties went down from
3.8 percent to 3.12, that of Class I towns went up (from 6.39 per cent to 8.39 per cent). In spite of skeptics these trends continue. This has led to the phenomenon of census towns in the last Census.

The preferred model is consistent with the pattern of urbanisation with clusters of settlements around large conglomerations. Policy should not be concentrated only on rural output and employment. In fact in a dynamic economy of the Indian type the distinction between the village and the small urban settlement can be very counterproductive and lead to all kind of projectionist distortions. A more productive mindset would be to orient policy to concentric circles of prosperity around diversifying agricultural bases and growth centres. Such possibilities are very real and substantial in India. Transportation, land use, infrastructure and technology dispersal policies can all be oriented to this objective. In fact it will be more sustainable. Slum populations are 25 to 40 per cent lower in smaller Class I towns as compared to million plus cities.

The public management issues involved in rapid and decentralised urban growth are so obvious that they do not need elaboration. Awareness of technology, system interrelations, decentralised planning foci, self reliant institutions which can productively borrow and build and run systems have all been discussed and yet only a small beginning made. These are going to be the great challenges of the next phase. The ability to raise and use resources productively will be at the heart of the matter. Recent policy failures like the inability to factor in census towns in policy inspire of indications almost ten years ago in the work of scholars like me is a point. (Y.K. Alagh, 2011)

Technological self-reliance on a mission mode, as in the past, will probably also continue as a requirement of the present of national security and other long term objective. It has been shown for example, that the development of the Param Super Computer led to the withdrawal of restrictions on export of super-computers to India. Again recently the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission has pointed out that sanctions on India made it more self-reliant in nuclear technology. Thus, some mission-oriented efforts are necessary in a world of restricted technology access. Since India has limited reserves of uranium, but very large reserves of thorium, a project like the Fast Breeder Reactor Nuclear Power Station, became a very important part of its search for long term energy solutions, since it takes a major step towards completing the nuclear fuel cycle, based on thorium, and therefore a relatively cheap and abundant source of power.

It would be naively optimistic to say that policies for introducing new technologies, which reduce financial and real resource costs, introduce newer more consumer friendly and sustainable products and help competitiveness, are already established. A beginning has been made but a lot more needs to be done. Temporary fiscal and monetary comfort which improves rates of return for cost reducing technologies and newer products, need more support. Standard setting, quality enforcement and organizational reform which makes all this possible, is also needed on a more larger plane, together with networks which hasten the process and fiscal sops to integrate these with the market. There are however major weaknesses in our organisation, networking, support and incentive and disincentive systems for the diffusion and replicability of such systems. The South Koreans at the Korea Institute of Science and Technology have a very user friendly technology networking system for diffusion. Techniques, financing mechanisms, best practice cases, tax and other systems support are there at the click of a mouse. In India our R & D statistics do not include investments at the level of small firms. I must have been the only Minister in history, who in a journal refereed paper showed that the statistics on R & D expenditure released by his Ministry were false. R & D statistics in India are only of those firms which are registered with the Ministry of Science and Technology. For the organised sector S & T expenditure was about one and a half percent of sales and not less than one percent. If the small scale sector was added with sample studies the percentage was even higher at around two.

The fact that a proper estimate of research and innovation in the small scale sector is not available, is by itself a matter of great concern – for surely networking with this sector should be a major concern of industrial technology policy. Small industry accounts for a large part of exports. Also it responds very flexibly to market pressures in terms of cost reduction and product innovation. (Alagh, Y.K., 1998)
Apart from lack of networking and strengthening systems, there is amazing stop go in policies. The 1997 Budget contained Rs.3000 million for a Technology Development Board and Dr. Ashok Ganguly, former Chairman of Hindustan Lever and a member of the Board of Levers International agreed to be a member of this Board. It also included a distinguished scientist, an agricultural expert and an economist. The Board funds projects which provide private sector joint investment and participation and which were expected to have large ripple effects on the economy. The Board is functioning but its mandate is changed. We find it difficult to manage these flexible networks in our large science establishments.

The governance systems will be playing a role of strategic planner and facilitator of change. These are complex issues, with a strong interface with good governance. Take the experience of the electricity sector as an example. Private sector investment was allowed in the early Nineties of the last century, but the institutional prerequisites were not there. The Electricity Regulatory commission (ERC) Bill could not be introduced in Parliament when initially drafted and was finally tabled in August 1997, but lapsed. The then Government initially passed on Ordinance, but later piloted the Bill with substantive amendments giving up the clause on a minimum required tariff rate for the agricultural sector and the mandatory powers of the State ERCs. The legislation on private participation in transmission of electricity was finalised by the Standing Committee of Parliament on Energy, only in 1997, after considerable debate and after that it got through Parliament easily with multi-party support. The Energy Efficiency Bill was discussed in draft form since 1996, but progress was slow. Finally we got the Electricity Bill. Meanwhile slow progress in legislation and establishment of institutions has seriously hampered investment in the generation, transmission and distribution of electricity, as the Review of the Eleventh Plan brings out. In anticipation of private sector investment, public investment was cut down and very few major projects were taken up in the public sector. But the private sector investment came slowly due to several constraints and complicated decision making processes, leading to great problems in this critical infrastructure and is still seen as a problem. A recent plan document says that there has been no FDI in power distribution not knowing that as Minister I had sanctioned and implemented the British Power Karnataka Mangalore STP Distribution project of over Rs.600 crores.

**Managing Technology Drivers for Jobs : Public Support Systems**

Serious research during the last decade and a half has shown fairly conclusively that the tremendous opportunities that are available with the new technology requires groups and systems which can manage its interdisciplinary nature, since applications cut across areas like biotechnology, communications and computerisation. If the preconditions are available it spreads very fast, both through space and sectors in economy and society. But if the infrastructure is not there, both physical and human, vast areas will be left out including some in the developed World. There is also the need of quick response. The Twelfth Plan examples of the AP Farmer managed irrigation systems and power reform distribution systems are examples. But not enough is seen.

**Rights, Vulnerable Groups and Transparency**

In the rapid changes that will take place in the country and the World in the Twenty First century, the Higher Civil Services will as is obvious, have to be at the cutting edge of being the protectors of the poor, the oppressed, the vulnerable and the underprivileged. The democratic urges and aspirations of India, enshrined in its constitution and its legislation, will have to be met in a fair and transparent manner not only impartially, but in spirit, by protecting the rights of the poor, limiting the coercive power of the State. Safety nets will need to be developed and implemented as the market economy expands. Poor women, and the girl child, the minorities, the tribal and the Dalit, the handicapped and the destitute, will need special attention. Recent examples of perverse use of State power are very distressing.

**Constitutional and Legal Perspectives : Human Rights and Environmental Law**

The Constitutional and legal dimensions of Public administration determine the powers, functions and accountability of the government.

YOJANA  January 2013
A major change in the evolution of civil services in India occurred with the adoption of a democratic constitution incorporating the ideas of rule of law, guaranteed rights and parliamentary government. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments envisage a further change in the same direction. Services under the Union and the States find a prominent place in the constitution itself. An autonomous Commission with vast powers for recruitment to the services is another important aspect which emphasises its role in constitutional governance.

Looked at in the above context we need to understand the significance of rule of law and the concept of limited government under a written federal-type Constitution. The values of the constitution written into Preamble, Fundamental rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive Principles have to become part of the system. As an instrument of governance the provisions of the Constitution and its interpretation by courts constitute a point of reference to all government action. These are subject to judicial review which is the foundation of rule of law under a scheme of constitutional governance.

The primary agency of the government to protect human rights, more particularly of weaker sections of society is the bureaucracy because they are the enforcers of the law. The Court steps in only if the executive fails to implement the laws or implement it contrary to law and selectively.

A constitution which proclaims secularism and social justice based on equal protection of the laws puts a heavy burden on government, both at the central and state level. Hence the importance of constitutional perspective.

Another dimension which conditions the functioning of civil society in modern times is the profusion of laws, national and international relating to economy, ecology, technology and international treaty obligations. The change in the concept of property from something tangible to forms which are intellectual and intangible brought almost a revolution in the laws of trade and commerce. Intellectual property law and trade related intellectual property rights have become critical in economic governance globally. Added to this is the revolution in information and communication technology which threw up a new legal framework for doing business within and outside government. Globalisation is happening not only in relation to market but in respect of all conceivable aspects of organised life to the fast changing legal climate in all these matters influencing both policy development and administration.

Yet another legal dimension impinging public governance at all levels is the jurisprudence of sustainable development. There are today legal parameters in the use of administration which have to be accommodated within sustainable limits. These are some of the significant legal perspectives which are critical for civil society in the future.

Change Parameters

The purpose of this discussion has been to draw out of the attributes that will be required from the system in the forthcoming period. These would include amongst others:

a) a sense of vision and direction in which the Indian socio-polity is moving, including its very diverse cultural plurality;

b) an ability to appreciate some of the real scarcities that are emerging as also the strengths of civil society to cope with them;

[(a) and (b) are important since India is still going through a development phase].

c) an ability to interface with modern technology, which provides the cutting edge to many solutions;

d) at higher levels of the system an ability to network with local government institutions, non-governmental organisations, cooperatives and other professional and people’s organisations;

e) a sense of rugged professionalism, persistence and doggedness in pursuit of objectives; urge to champion beneficial change;

f) energy to pursue objectives;

g) a sense of fair play, honesty, political and systemic support;

h) compassion for the underprivileged and above all; a commitment to India as envisioned by its founding fathers.

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HEN I started writing this article on Public Policy and Governance, I was a bit puzzled as what to write and what not to write? Many pioneer works have been done in this area, in India and also globally. Almost all shades, of it, over the years, have been explored by various scholars and practitioners. And, my thoughts took me to an old time story written by revered writer Munshi Premchandjee. This story is about a local leader who was very respectable and popular amongst the people. He, all through his life fought for the justice, equality and transparency. The leader had a very pretty and intelligent daughter with whom he used to share all his progressive thoughts and spiritual discourse. She was very impressed with her father and she always considered him as a role model. She had a lot of respect for him. She rather believed that only a person like him can give good governance and do justice to his people. Once, on the eve of a big festival, her father was invited by the local community to be the chief guest and to perform the special pooja in the temple which the community was organising and also requested him to give award and bless the youth who belonged to the same village who had done some commendable work for the society. The leader accepted the invitation and gave his consent to be the part of the special occasion. On the special day, the daughter also accompanied her father to be the part of the celebration. The special pooja was well performed and then for conferring award, the name of the youth was called for the award. The Youth came forward, touched the feet of the leader and got his blessings. His citation was read before everybody that how he helped educating people and fighting against any kind of discrimination, be it caste, class, creed, region, religion, belief etc. He was praised further about how he could bring change amongst them. The leader, in his speech, also had lot of praise for him. He admired him by saying that our country should have youth like him. He could be the role model for the whole society and generations to come. He then in his praise garlanded him and hugged him. The leader’s daughter was carefully listening to each word her father was saying in the praise of the youth and was feeling very happy within. The daughter, while returning home,

The good governance comes out from the strong commitment of the government where all commitment is made keeping people as focus.
was engrossed with her father’s speech and constantly thinking about her father. All the scenes were repeatedly flashing before her and reminding her again and again that how her father hugged the youth, knowing well that he comes from the lower caste. She became emotional and hugged her father and whispered in his ears, “Babujee! I love you.” The father smiled, patted and hugged her.

A few days later, when they were taking their morning tea together at home the daughter asked her father, “Babujee! Will you give me something if I may ask?” Father said, I am here for you only. Listening to that, she very politely asked her father, “Will you marry me with the youth whom you have given the award on the special day and you blessed him as role model? I love him and wish to marry him. The entire atmosphere reversed to opposite, father stood up with anger and shouted at her “How dare you say so? It is impossible. How can a lower caste man become my son-in-law? Don’t you know that a lower caste cannot marry to a high caste? This is simply an unpardonable act”..........and then everything crumbled before her like a glass house............... the special pooja, award ceremony, her father speech, his behaviour towards youth and his reaction to her proposal ......... This is the reality of life.

Such realities of olden days are even true today. This story led me to analyse that mere policy or intention is not important for better outcome, it is even more important that it is translated and implemented in its true spirit to get intended outcomes. The challenges of yester years are even true today in the 21st century. The social practices are much more dominant than the rule of law. Whether we talk about the verdict given by the panchayat or any local community groups those verdicts are respected and at times over power the rule of law. Just to elaborate my point I would like to give another example. As an official picture (Rules, Act, policy, programmes), provisions of the constitution of India itself denote that discrimination of any type is constitutionally not acceptable. Every individual is protected by law on any kind of discrimination. But, from the other hand, social practice is quite opposite of that. The old values is still much more prevalent and practiced, for example the status of women in the society, even after constitutional provision, many policies, programmes, legislation remains very low on many indicators. Patriarchal beliefs, social ideology and practices many a times over power the rule of law. When it comes to practice, the unwritten social code of conduct is given priority over the written law. Hence the challenge is how to make a shift from mere governance to governance outcomes.

It is important to mention that the World is changing, very fast. It got transformed from local to global with the IT and communication revolution. Economically also, in the era of globalisation, the interdependence between the countries have increased much more. But the larger question still to be answered that How much we have changed with the changing world. Are we still rigid and not able to accommodate new ideas? Or our ideas are much more superior to any other type? The question which we also need to look at is have our governance system is changing as per the need of the hour or ready to change and provide good governance and providing better service to the people. This paper would try and look into the reforms and the indicators of governance, some of the better practices and try and analyse the challenges in the changing environment. How much of our vertical structure of governance is ready to embrace the horizontal ones to make society a just society, leading towards more egalitarian belief.

Definition of Governance

The word governance derives from the Greek verb κυβερνάω [kubernáo] which means to steer and was used for the first time in a metaphorical sense by Plato. It then passed on to Latin and then on to many languages. And, in English has been defined as supremacy, ascendency, domination, power, authority, control etc. Governance is the act of governing. It relates to decisions that define expectations, grant power, or verify performance.

Over the years, there have been many definitions propounded by experts for governance. Just to take a look at a few definitions, the Wikipedia defines it as, governance is the act of governing. It relates to decisions that define expectations, grant power or verify performance. It consists of either a separate process or part of management or leadership processes. These processes and systems are typically administered by a government. When discussing governance in particular institutions, the quality of governance within the institutions is often compared to a standard of good governance. Way back, much before Plato, Kautitya, in his treatise, Arthashastra while defining governance had emphasised on a few key pillars of the area such as justice, ethics and anti autocratic forms of government as bigger frame work of art of governance. Despite long provenance of ideas? Or our ideas are much more superior to any other type? The question which we also need to look at is have our governance system is changing as per the need of the hour or ready to change and provide good governance and providing better service to the people. This paper would try and look into the reforms and
opposed to “good” governance) can be defined as the rule of the rulers, typically within a given set of rules. One might conclude that governance is the process – by which authority is conferred on rulers, by which they make the rules, and by which those rules are enforced and modified. Thus, understanding 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. (The World Bank)

Governance consists of the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised. This includes the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them.

**Governance Indicators and Good Governance**

There is much subjectivity involved when we make comparative statement about good and bad governance. Each government consider themselves as most transparent and equality based governance with full of egalitarian choices. World Bank Governance Indicators Based on a long-standing research program of the World Bank, the **Worldwide Governance Indicators**, since 1996 to till date, captured six key dimensions of governance i) Voice & Accountability ii) Political Stability and Lack of Violence iii) Government Effectiveness iv) Regulatory Quality v) Rule of Law and vi) Control of Corruption. They measured the quality of governance in over 200 countries, based on close to 40 data sources produced by over 30 different organizations worldwide and are updated on an annual basis since 2002. World Bank Governance indicators have also made distinction between Rules based and Outcome-Based indicators. The former talks about the existence of rules, policy, and legislation, whereas the latter consider its enforcement. But there is no clear line existing to make clear cut distinction between the two. Whereas, UNDP has recognized nine indicators of good governance which may be brought or understood as outcome indicators. Good governance is, participatory, transparent and accountable, effective and equitable, and it promotes the rule of law. It ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources (UNDP, 1997). Absence of good governance acts as against the principle of inclusiveness in the achievement of sustainable development. The nine indicators of UNDP recognize the following core characteristics of good governance, which are: 1) Participation 2) Rule of law 3) Transparency 4) Responsiveness 5) Consensus oriented 6) Equity 7) Effectiveness and Efficiency 8) Accountability and 9) Strategic vision. Inclusion of these indicators may lead to a good output.

The growing recognition of the link between good governance and successful development, as empirical evidence suggests, has stimulated the demand for monitoring the quality of governance across countries and within individual countries over time. The Worldwide Governance Indicators are a compilation of the perceptions of a very diverse group of respondents, collected in large number of surveys and other cross-country assessments of governance. Some of these instruments capture the views of firms, individuals, and public officials in the countries being assessed. Others reflect the views of NGOs and aid donors with considerable experience in the countries being assessed, while others are based on the assessments of commercial risk-rating agencies.

Despite many perceptions of good governance it is important to keep popular people’s perception in mind. These days there has been a nation wide debate going on about the transparency in governance for making corruption free governance. This indicator could be one of the most sought after indicators of good governance. As making governance corruption free, many initiatives have been taken in the past and many more are going to be put on the table. Right to Information Act, debate for bringing Lok Pal Bill, setting up of Institution of Chief Vigilance Commissioner could be another important tool for good governance which may lead in reducing the gaps between policy and implementation.

**Case Study**

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA), 2005 is landmark legislation in Indian history. Potential implementation of MNREGA needs adequate capacitated implementing body. In West Bengal, the Gram Panchayat (village council) is the primary program implementing agency of NREGA. In order to assess the performance of Gram Panchayat (GP) in performing core characteristics of Good Governance and to explore the relationship between good governance and employment generation through MNREGA. This case study of GPs of Paschim Medinipur (West
Midnapore) district of West Bengal is an example of good governance that reveals the core components of good governance which has significant positive impact on creating average person days per household under MNREGA in GP.

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA), 2005 is landmark legislation in Indian history of social security legislation after independence. Enacted after a successful struggle for an employment guarantee legislation, this legislation is a partial victory towards a full-fledged right to employment in any developing country context. For the first time, right to work has been made a legal compulsion and entitlement for unemployment allowances in case of non-allotment of employment assured through this act. What is considered to be crucial is the empowerment of the poor through the provision of a right-based law, which would act as a strong safety net in the lack of alternative employment opportunities for poor people.

The other key attributes of this scheme are time bound guarantee, labor-intensive work, decentralized participatory planning, women empowerment, work site facilities, and above all, transparency and accountability through the provision of social audits and right to information. MNREGA is a unique and unprecedented effort in strengthening grass-root democracy in India. In West Bengal, GP is the primary program implementing agency of NREGA, along with other PRI bodies and line departments.

A study conducted by Dipjoy Sen Roy & Debabrata Samanta on the good governance with West Bengal case took following five indicators which quantify the quality of governance; i) Participation ii) Transparency iii) Accountability iv) Effectiveness & efficiency and v) Equity. The study used the linear regression model. Almost all the indicators of the regression model used in the study have shown positive results.

The scale of NREGA employment in 2008-09 was massive: if NREGA worksites were open only for one day in the year, one would find 216 crore people working! On average each household (that worked on NREGA works) got 48 days of employment. Of the households that worked on NREGA, more than one-tenth got their full entitlement of 100 days. Finally, note that a large proportion of the employment went to disadvantaged groups such as SCs and STs. Women got close to half of all employment (48%), which is higher than stipulated under the Act.

There are several criteria on which the implementation of the NREGA can be evaluated. These include scale of NREGA employment generated, participation of women and other disadvantaged groups in NREGA, quality of assets created under NREGA, involvement of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the planning process, implementation of transparency safeguards (important for controlling corruption), labour “friendliness” (work on-demand, timely payments and so on) of the system and so on.

Tamil Nadu is another good example of states from which there is much to learn. Initially, the state focused its energies on the basics: improving capacity at the GP and Block levels and putting systems in place. Great attention was paid to details such as the design of formats for record-keeping, monitoring mechanisms, and so on. For example, the job card in Tamil Nadu includes illustrations aimed at awareness generation apart from being innovative in recording attendance and payments. The “slow and steady” approach means that, in terms of employment generation, Tamil Nadu was at the bottom of the ladder in 2006-07. Yet by 2009-10, it was close to the top.

Conclusion

The good governance comes out from the strong commitment of the government where all commitment is made with keeping people as central focus. In both the case studies there are many things are in common. Policy, legislation, rules, programmes etc are essential for governance reforms which determine the governance rules where as its execution with same or even higher commitment is much more important to have the outcomes. The institutional arrangements required for the implementation should encourage involvement of people in the entire decision making process. The need of the hour is to have decentralised process of planning, implementation and monitoring of the programme and projects. This vertical and horizontal structure of governance should work in harmony to ensure good governance leading to intended objectives. Public Policy (the official intended picture) and practice (the reality) should not have the huge gap and be seen in isolation with each other. The institutions designed for its implementation must demonstrate its integration and bridge the gap between the two. This may lead to transparent, corruption free, value and ethics-based governance, and this will have high replicability value leading to an equity and egalitarian value based society.

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E-Governance: Need for a bottom-up approach

Sameer Kochhar

O

N ITS journey to improve services for citizens, the government has undertaken several successful e-governance initiatives such as MCA21 (to improve the speed and certainty in the delivery of the services of Ministry of Company Affairs), online submission of income tax returns, Passport Seva Kendra (PSK), etc. Also, to roll out all the planned 1,100 e-governance services by 2014, the government is making huge investment — up to Rs 40,000 crore. This investment will cover the cost of all kinds of hardware and software that will be required for capacity building.

‘At your service’ or Mee Seva is Government of Andhra Pradesh’s window to its citizens. Nearly 6,000 Mee Seva Counters are servicing over 50,000 requests per day, which are geared to handle 100,000 transactions a day. It has converged all National e-Governance Programme (NeGP) initiatives in rendering G2C services in a fast and secure way — thus ended the “tyranny of ink signatures”. Back-end applications interact with database and pull out information and front-end application receives the citizen’s request and communicates with departmental application — therefore gives a single view of the citizen. It involves departments like revenue, registration, municipal administration, education and other service delivery channels.

Reduction in cost, increase in storage, flexibility, information access from anywhere and no worries about keeping software up to date are but few considerations that encouraged Government of Maharashtra to pioneer a MahaGov Cloud. Implemented in State Data Centre, it is being used by departments for website and application hosting. Out of 42 government departments, 25 are already on the cloud that hosts 70 different applications. Using feature of thin provision of storage and memory, resources are efficiently utilized and allocated as per the requirement and performance. It is helping the SDC team to manage planned maintenance without requiring any downtime of the application, thus has increased procedural efficiencies.

Achieving success in e-governance requires active partnerships between government, citizens and the private sector

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For the most part, and notwithstanding the success stories outlined above, the transition from traditional government to e-government has overlaid technology onto an existing business model—a model of disconnected silos. Policymaking, budgets, accountability, decision-making, and service delivery were all embedded within a vertically integrated delivery chain based on specific government functions. Ten years on, we have enough learnings to show that this approach simply does not work. E-governance projects should be citizen centric and not technology centric. To improve citizen services, the government needs to collaborate as the major challenge is that each department works in silos with its own infrastructure — data centres, network etc.

Citizens and businesses want greater access to government information and services, with simpler processes, less paperwork, and more efficient interactions. Citizens also expect flexible, convenient interactions, sophisticated online services, and prompt responses to their requests. Increasingly frustrated by complexity, the need to visit multiple locations, and the need to execute multiple transactions to satisfy simple requests, citizens now demand 24x7 access and rapid resolution. But the expense to provide traditional services and to extend around-the-clock availability to those services can be astronomical.

Multi-channel access (for example, web, phone, text message, and in-person) can offer constituents access through those channels that suit their needs and preferences. Governments can also reduce costs substantially by migrating users from high-cost channels (in-person) to low-cost ones (transactional websites). Another important consideration is social inclusion. By far, the poorest and most vulnerable groups are often the greatest users of government services. But these populations are the least equipped to use technology. The ultimate goals of implementing technology solutions are to free more resources, help socially excluded groups, and to eliminate the digital divide.

While providing technology that better supports the citizen and workers is a significant step forward, there remains the challenge of connecting disparate government agencies to improve collaboration. Successful operations depend upon seamless collaboration and sharing of information and resources. This requires robust, scalable technology such as the cloud to operate effectively, as without them the best intentions can be undermined by simple breakdowns in the collaboration and communication.

Technology advances have opened up new possibilities and raised expectation about governments’ role and how governments should serve communities. These factors include:

- Cloud computing as a viable ICT provisioning model and a way to reduce costs and deliver new services.
- Social media to enhance and improve levels of participation and citizen satisfaction.
- Unique identity technologies enable greater degrees of inter-agency collaboration and information sharing.
- Open data and government data stores to allow much wider access to publishing and distributing public information.

It is necessary to bring together a set of IT capabilities that genuinely provide an end-to-end solution to the government’s technology needs - while also building in the interoperability and openness which is essential for the multi-vendor world in which governments operate. Getting the full benefit of the technologies and solutions requires a comprehensive programme of organizational and cultural change within the government sector, to ensure that technology is not just bolted on to old ways of working but delivers transformational impacts for citizens and businesses.

Given the quasi-federal nature of the Indian setup, Centre-State and inter-state cooperation is necessary for smooth functioning of the democratic process. This cooperation is also necessary for successful implementation of e-governance. Whether it is in e-governance, treasury operations, urban planning or rural roads connectivity, state of Madhya Pradesh has emerged as a pioneer leveraging IT in each one of them. The Directorate of Treasuries and Accounts has ensured that its 4.8 lakh employees, 4.9 lakh vendors and about 15,000 pensioners receive their payments using e-Payment system. Currently, 187 treasuries / sub-treasuries are enabled for performing e-Payment.

Mukhya Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana is an example of convergence of MGNREGS MP with other schemes like PMGSY,
where permanent assets are created. The roads are being developed in a cluster approach across 50 districts in Madhya Pradesh. Online monitoring, contractor details, expenditure and progress details are available on a real time basis. The state government has also started the scheme for recovery of bank NPA against government-sponsored employment oriented, poverty alleviation and socially desirable schemes. Recovery of bank overdues is made against Revenue Recovery Certificates filed by banks as arrears of land revenue. Webbased BRISC software provides real time information on recoveries to stakeholders, i.e., Tehsil, Bank Branch, Nodal District Branch, Lead District Manager, and District Collector. Online Patwari Exam has removed manual intervention resulting in huge savings in time and improvement in efficiency. Over 100,000 candidates have applied so far, out of which 80,932 candidates were tested. The entire MIS is available online. Further, 110 of its cities are ready with City Development Plans while CDPs of 270 municipalities are being prepared. All the CDPs are available online.

The importance of adopting a bottoms-up approach cannot be emphasised enough. Reaching the last mile is an issue across all development programmes whether it is financial inclusion, delivery of health services or e-governance. In this context, one needs to speed up the e-District project, for instance. Envisaged as Mission Mode Project under the National e-Governance Plan, it is proceeding at a slow pace, in different directions and hardly qualifies for a national endeavour. Districts are the de facto front-end of government where most government-to-consumer or G2C interaction takes place. The e-District project was conceptualised to improve this experience and enhance the efficiencies of the various departments at the district-level to enable seamless service delivery to the citizen. Front-ends under the scheme, in the form of citizen facilitation centres, are envisioned to be built at District-, Tehsil-, Sub-division- and Block-levels. Village-level front-ends would be established through Common Services Centres (CSCs) for delivery of services.

Implementation of an efficient electronic workflow system for the District Administration is at the heart of e-District. This coupled with challenging terrain such as in Assam makes it doubly difficult. Admittedly, AMTRON took up the challenge and connected ten departments in two districts – Goalpara and Sonitpur with the aim to increase accountability, efficiency and transparency in operations such that public is benefited to maximum extent possible. Citizens can now receive digitally signed documents. The format of ‘Application Forms’ has been standardized which can be used by all CSC/e-District Centres across the state. All front-end officers have been trained to deliver single window services. The system is designed to be process driven rather than champion driven.

Despite NeGP, India still lacks a full-fledged ICT framework for implementation of e-governance. Complete implementation of e-governance will include building technical hardware and software infrastructure. It will also include better and faster connectivity options. Newer connectivity options will include faster broadband connections and faster wireless networks such as 3G and 4G. There is little argument to the fact that cellular phones based on various wireless technologies have revolutionised telecommunication in India. But these cellular technologies have not been sufficiently applied to deliver broadband data connectivity to households in rural area due to high both cost and complexity. It is now learnt that all the 250,000 Panchayats in the country will have broadband connectivity by November 2013. Till you are connected, how can one even presume to deliver e-governance.

Given that we are now in an era where technology provides much greater inter-operability than before and standards based integration is far more realistic we can look at a more structured approach going forward. Successful delivery of e-governance must by definition be led by the government itself. But private partners can help governments by providing expert technical support. IT initiatives in the government in India have largely been on a piecemeal basis characterized by a lack of vision that has limited the resultant benefits. The use of innovative public-private partnership models has been very limited and needs to be reviewed.

Worldwide, PPPs are often essential to the efficient, speedy and sustainable design and delivery of e-government services and programmes. E-government initiatives in developing countries are constrained by lack of financial
resources, low level of skills and capacity within governments, and the absence of incentive structures for rewarding performance – and the case in India seems to be no different. PPPs in e-government can help overcome many of these constraints, while at the same time increasing opportunities for the private sector.

PPP can assume a wide spectrum of shapes like, BOO, BOOT (Build-Own-Operate-Transfer), BOT for specified periods -otherwise called concession contracts, joint ventures, private finance initiative (PFI), partial privatisation through partnering with strategic investor etc. The idea is to arrive at the right combination of public sector accountability with private sector efficiencies and to also to share the risk correspondingly. To mitigate risk and ensure quality and performance levels of the private sectors, it is important to set standards. The Government of India is currently working on standards management and has various drafts prepared relating to inter-operability, technical and security standards.

Experiences across the globe show that IT is one of the areas which is eminently suited for PPP – especially, in areas such as driving licenses, utility bill collections, management of land records etc. Investments in information technology by governments have an opportunity cost since there are limited resources of money, time and attention. Investing these in IT would explicitly deny such investments in other development areas like provision of water, sanitation, health, shelter, production technology and skills development. Investments in information technology have therefore to be made very strategically by governments. The Government of Andhra Pradesh, for instance, has focused its energies on creation of content and digitisation of databases so that transaction based services become attractive for private sector players. For example, in the case of the TWINS project after a successful demonstration of the pilot, private sector partners have been involved to provide services to citizens. In the case of infrastructure creation, government has leveraged assets like land for attracting private sector investments to set up facilities like Hitec City. Similarly, the government has used the provision of a royalty free right of way for attracting investments into setting up high-speed optical fibre networks. The possible usage of such networks for e-government applications in the future has in turn enhanced their commercial viability.

Achieving success in e-governance requires active partnerships between government, citizens and the private sector. The e-governance process needs continuous input and feedback from the ‘customers’ — the citizens, resident, businesses and officials who use electronic public services. Their voices and ideas from the grassroots are essential to making e-governance work. Hence e-governance has to be a shared vision with all the stakeholders – government and non-government — participating in defining this vision.

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A HUNDRED AND sixty kilometers from the state capital Bhopal, deep inside the verdant forests of Harda district, Amar Lal, a resident of Keljhiri village and Class 12 student of the nearby Rehatgao Government Higher Secondary School, saw his dream come true when every last house in his village boasted of a toilet-cum-bathroom. “I have always seen grand bathrooms in films but actually having them here, in this remote village, comes to me as a surprise,” exclaims the overwhelmed Amar who sees these toilets as a relief more than a luxury for his aging parents.

Indeed, unknown to Amar, this is one dream he has in common with the world’s second-richest man, Bill Gates, who during his visit to India in early June lauded India’s efforts in improving its health parameters and assured of his continued support in sync with the country’s national health programmes. Keljhiri, with all its forty five Korku tribal families flaunting well furnished forty square feet sized toilet-cum-bathroom units, stands tall among over two thousand forest villages of the country, by being declared an open-defecation-free village. In 1999, Government of India launched the Total Sanitation Campaign as a comprehensive programme to ensure sanitation facilities in rural areas with broader goal to eradicate the practice of open defecation. With an aim to eradicate the practice of open defecation by 2017, GOI has launched Nirmal Gram Puraskar to recognize the efforts in terms of cash awards for fully covered PRIs and those individuals and institutions who have contributed significantly in ensuring full sanitation coverage in their area of operation. For Keljhiri to be eligible for the award, the two other villages of the Panchayat need to follow its footsteps.

These units have been constructed by the Village Forest Protection Committee using profits received from the sale of teak wood from 1355 hectare of land handed over to the people for forest protection. The State Government’s landmark decision has enabled the Forest Protection Committee to share profit from the income of disposal of forest wealth.

This collective initiative of four hundred and fifty people is driven by their realization of the need for sanitation. Sharing the journey of...
the transformation of these good intentions into action, the President of the Village Protection Committee Gulaub enthusiastically narrates how the idea of constructing well-furnished quality toilets surfaced during discussions on utilization of profit money earned from the commercial disposal of teak from the area earmarked for the committee. The committee, he said received Rs. 19, 96,000 rupees as profit. Many things were planned but the construction of toilet-cum-bathroom was the priority.

After the resolution was passed by the committee, it was conveyed to top forest authorities including Chief Conservator of the Forest B.K. Singh, Hoshangabad circle under which Harda forest range falls. “We were apprehensive about our decision, but, motivated, by B.K. Singh’s support, we started the construction of toilets in November 2011. He helped us to finalize the design and the distribution plan for water draw out. With every family participating in the construction to save the labour cost, we were able to complete the construction in March 2012,” says Rajesh Thakur, an active pancha representing Keljhiri in Badwani Gram Panchayat.

“For years, villagers have been going to the river side and sometimes deep in the forest for defecation. The rainy season brought with it several problems, making it the most difficult time especially for the womenfolk. I regard this “new” facility as a symbol of dignity. Now we can keep away many diseases, so say the health officials visiting our village,” feels seventy five years old Sabulal.

According to Mr. B.K. Singh, the most striking feature is the quality of construction which promises the survival of these structures for more than fifty years. Quality plumbing material has been used. Use of tiles and a 500-litres capacity water container placed atop each toilet unit and connected to a 10,000-liter overhead tank assures durability. The cost of each unit is Rs. 39,000.

The ground water level is an advantage with Keljhiri. The bore well provides enough water guaranteeing the use of toilets for years. Nearby flows the Ajnar River, a tributary of Narmada, due to which ground water level never goes down even in summer. “We have also set up an executive committee within the Village Forest Protection Committee to monitor and address issues emerging in future,” says Ramulal, an active member of the committee. Explaining the water supply system, he informs that in the morning, the 10,000-litre capacity supply tank is filled using the bore well. All 45 overhead 500 litre water tanks are then filled. The committee pays the electricity bill. Average monthly bill is nearly Rs. 500. Every toilet has a septic tank. We are planning to plant saplings of citrus fruit bearing plants around toilets to utilize the waste water, he adds.

Keljhiri has a primary school, a middle school and Anganwadi centre. Students’ strength in the middle school is 42 while the primary school has 80 children. As a part of this project, functional toilets at Anganwadi centre and schools are also being renovated.

For Mithibai, this asset has brought honour to the village and to her family. She says that over a hundred children in their teens would be attaining maturity soon. Daughters-in-law will no longer face this problem. Difficult times have come to an end forever now. It is a new beginning for the villagers of Keljhiri.

Keljhiri has carved out an enviable identity, says Urmila Bai Chaudhari, Sarpanch of Badwani Gram Panchayat. When asked about her leadership role as Sarpanch in achieving sanitation coverage, she said that she honoured the decision of Village Forest Protection Committee and extended moral support. What mattered was the commitment and enthusiasm of every household. Inspired by the success, villagers of Khumi and Badwani which fall under the same Panchayat have started holding dialogues on ways to replicate the Keljhiri model.

The success of the project can be estimated from the fact that statements like “When Keljhiri can do it, why cannot we?” are pouring in from the neighboring villages who wish to seek guidance from Keljhiri Village for starting the process.

“What the well-off people in surrounding villages are still thinking of it, Keljhiri has already done it, emerging as a pioneering village,” feels Arjun, a Class 9 student.

“My worry is that there is no provision for declaring Keljhiri an open defecation free village despite total sanitation coverage until two remaining villages Badwani and Khumi achieve total sanitation,” says Gyan Singh Tomar, secretary of Badwani Gram Panchayat. “Now I will request the district authorities to send a proposal to Government of India citing the Keljhiri example, so that individual achievement could also be acknowledged,” he adds.

Charkha Features
In the year 2005, UNDP defined, “e-Governance is The Information and Communication Technologies with the aim of improving information and service delivery, encouraging citizen participation in the decision-making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective.” India is a nation of villages. The rural mass in the nation comprises the core of Indian society and also represents the real India. According to the Census Data 2011, there are 638,387 villages in India that represent more than 72 per cent of the total population. In a participatory democratic society, ICT can be used for good governance, enhance democratization and citizen empowerment. The digital governance creates better connections between citizens and government and encourages their participation in governance. The process gives chance to open up the avenues for direct participation of women in government policy making process. It is very significant in rural areas where people deprived of getting benefit of the different integrated development programmes.

Definition of e-Governance: World Bank, 2001 e-Government is the government owned or operated systems of information and communication technologies that transform relations with citizens, the private sector and/or other government agencies so as to promote citizens’ empowerment, improve service delivery, strengthen accountability, increase transparency, or improve government efficiency.

Application of e-governance for inclusive development

The Fig. shows how a transition is feasible from ‘open doors to open hearts’, with the application of ICT. The application of e-governance can create an open door administration and transparent government. To describe the designing message for rural development through e-governance, it is considered that it should have citizen-centric services and dependable. In this system, the selection of appropriate (dependable, maintainable and cost-effective) technologies for rural connectivity and information processing solutions should focus on the betterment of society. However, we should keep in mind that the inequity of economic condition of...
rural masses should not create any hindrance to access their required information, which is considered one of the basic constraints in any participatory development.

**Rural e-government initiatives**

**Computerized Rural Information System Project [CRISP]:** It aimed at facilitating the District Rural Development Agency [DRDA] in the monitoring of exercise of poverty alleviation programmes through Computer based Information System. Till date four version of CRISP application software packages have been developed. Rural soft 2000 allows online monitoring of processes right from the desktop of monitoring agencies at Centre and State and enables a common man to access information using a browser based interface provided by the software.


**State Wide Network Area Project [SWAN]:** This project aims at providing high speed, high connectivity network connecting offices at block level for faster access to Government services.

**Rural e-government projects**

**e-Choupal:** Agriculture is the backbone of India. Indian farmers have to depend on many agents, right from the process of procuring raw materials to selling their produce. Each agent will add his/her profit margin, thereby increasing the cost of product. Some agents even try to block the market information. To protect farmers from such practices, the International Business Division of Indian Tobacco Company (ITC-IBD) came out with an e-government initiative called e-Choupal (which means a village meeting place). E-Choupal is useful not only to the agricultural products but also for selling home appliances and consumer goods. Each e-Choupal is equipped with a PC, internet connection, printer and Uninterrupted Power Supplies (UPS). In case the power supply is erratic, a solar panel is provided and if internet connectivity is not up to the mark, then a Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) connection is provided along with another solar panel to support that. There are 6,500 E-Choupals today. Indian Tobacco Company Ltd. is adding 7 new E-Choupals a day and plans to scale up to 20,000 E-Choupals by 2012 covering 100,000 villages in 15 states, servicing 15 million farmers.

**Drishtee:** Drishtee is a rural model of distribution and promotional network for consumer goods and basic services. Information is provided to the users in the form of services via internet. Drishtee made a presence in Dhar, Seoni and Shahdol districts in Madhya Pradesh, Sirsa district in Haryana and Jalandhar district in Punjab. A village entrepreneur is trained to handle the software that works on MS SQL Server at the back-end and runs on ASP, Java script, VB Script at the front-end. The hardware includes a web server, a district server, kiosks and dial-ups. The district server regularly gets connected to the web server and performs updates. The database of kiosk gets updated whenever the kiosk gets connected to the district server or the web server. Soochanalayas or centres have been established to cater to 25–30 surrounding villages and buildings of Gram Panchayats.

**Akashganga:** Akashganga uses ICT to facilitate rural milk producers by integrating all the operations of rural co-operative society right from milk procurement to accounting. First pilot model of Dairy Information System Kiosk (DISK) is currently under implementation at Uttarsanda Dairy Cooperative Society in Gujarat. Each farmer is given a plastic identification card. When farmers arrive at the Raw Milk Receiving Dock (RMRD) counter, his/her identification is updated in the PC. The milk is emptied out in a steel trough kept over a weighbridge and the weight of the milk is displayed as well as entered into the PC. One operator is required for filling of
cans and another for measuring fat content and updating the PC. The infrastructure used to carry out these operations includes weighing balance, microprocessor, printer, milk analysers and a display.

Gyandoot: Gyandoot has been established as community-owned, technologically innovative and sustainable information kiosks in a poverty-stricken, tribal-dominated rural area of the state of Madhya Pradesh. The server system runs on Windows NT with Internet Information Services (IIS) server; client PCs run Windows 98. Information kiosks have dial-up connectivity. The server hub is housed in the computer room in the district panchayat. Kiosks have been established in the village panchayat buildings. Typically, villages that function as block headquarters or hold weekly markets in tribal areas, or located at major junctions, were chosen for setting up kiosks. The entire network of 31 kiosks cover 311 panchayats (village committees), over 600 villages and a population of around half a million (i.e. about 50% of the entire district). [5] Jagriti E-Sewa: The emphasis of Jagriti is deployment of appropriate, affordable, scalable and sustainable technologies available in the developing countries. The system works on LINUX, which is a ‘License-Free’ operating system. Old computers (e.g. Pentium I) are used in some places. The project uses dial-up telephone lines. The whole system can be adapted to any language in the least time. The kiosks are located in villages where there is a sizeable flow of public on a regular basis. Each kiosk is set up to serve about 25,000–30,000 people and is owned and operated by a ‘Kiosk Franchisee’ who is typically an educated youth or an ex-serviceman. It is ensured that the kiosk generates adequate revenue streams so as to justify its operations.

Rural Access to Services through Internet (RASI): Sustainable Access in Rural India (SARI), now renamed as RASI, provides internet and voice connectivity to the villages of Madurai district in Tamil Nadu. The project has 100 internet kiosks in more than 100 villages. Current network technology is based on the CorDECT that was jointly developed by the TeNet group at IIT Madras, Analog Devices Inc. and Midas at Chennai. A CorDECT access centre is located roughly 25 km from the kiosks. Internet facility is provided with the help of Wireless Local Loop (WLL). Each kiosk is connected to the website containing information relating to revenue, registration, rural development, education, health, agriculture and animal husbandry. The major source of income for the operators has been computer education for children.

Tata Kisan Kendra (TKK): Tata Chemicals Ltd. came out with TKK to help farmers in states of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab. The TKK tracks key parameters relevant to farmers, such as soil, ground water and weather on a real-time basis with the help of Geographic Information Systems (GIS). The GIS software provides spatial information regarding roads, rivers or buildings. It works by imposing layers of data in digitised maps with information about administrative, socio-economic and physical set-up. Satellite image processing can help detect unproductive farming practices, track the progress of insect attacks across states, get crop estimates or update maps. Currently there are 11 main kiosks and around 300 franchisees. TKKs and is looking to set up 40 more kiosks and 800 franchisees to serve 48,000 villages.

LokMitra: LokMitra project was developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) in Himachal Pradesh, in order to provide easy access at remote areas and to redress complaints. The LokMitra Intranet in Hamirpur district consists of two Pentium III based servers, with four Pentium III-based client systems. The servers and the clients are connected on a LAN. The hub is placed in the Deputy Commissioner’s office. The client systems are used by the officials from concerned departments for answering the complaints and queries received and for updating with information. The LokMitra software interface is web-enabled, user-friendly and has two modules: one for the citizen information centres and the other for the control room.

N-Logue: N-Logue Communications Pvt. Ltd. provides telecom and internet services in small towns and rural areas of India. For operational purposes N-Logue divides the country into service areas corresponding approximately to a taluka(Tehsil). Eighty-five percent of taluka headquarters in India have optical fibre today which acts as the backbone for telecom and internet connectivity. N-Logue ties up with a number of content providers such as state government, rural development ministry, agricultural ministry and fertiliser/pesticide manufacturers. N-Logue employs WLL technology as the basis for its village-level communications. The CorDECT technology used operates on the same principles as regular wireless technology, providing internet access at 35–70 kbps to 1 gbps. The subscriber set can transmit both voice and data signals simultaneously to an access centre which must be located within a 25 km distance.
Bellandur Project: Bellandur Project is a gram panchayat e-government solution. Working closely with the panchayat members and village residents, the software was designed to suit the needs of panchayat administration. Bellandur Rational Unified Process (RUP), a set of software engineering tools, enables a phased and interactive approach to e-government. At present, the panchayat office has three computers, one for each of the bill collectors. All the district offices, taluka offices and gram panchayats are connected. The committee meetings are aired on the cable television.

Kisan Call Centers: Is mainly to respond to the issues raised by farmers instantly in the local language on a continuous basis. The Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture has launched this scheme during April 2002 with a view to leverage the extensive telecom infrastructure in the country to deliver the extension services to the farming community. But most of the farmers are not aware, so there is a need to improve the awareness among farmers on Kissan Call Centres (KCC) - particularly its cost free services through toll free telephone so as benefit needy farmers. Therefore Ministry of Agriculture has developed plans to strengthen the communications of KCC through the Agriculture and line departments, SAUs, ICAR organizations. They also exhibit in publicity material (posters, charts, banners etc.) of toll free number in all programs viz., training, demonstration etc.

Suggestions

Cost Reduction and Efficiency Gains: The appropriate application of ICT may possibly reduce the number of inefficiencies in processes by allowing file and data sharing across government departments, thereby contributing to the elimination of mistakes from manual procedures, reducing the required time for transactions. Efficiency is also attained by streamlining internal processes, by enabling faster and more informed decision making, and by speeding up transaction processing.

Quality of Service Delivery to Businesses and Customers: In the traditional model of public service delivery, the procedures are long, time consuming and lack transparency. A business that wishes to obtain a license or a permit has to fill out a number of application forms, has to visit a number of different offices and spend a considerable amount of time. If a citizen wishes to be issued with a certificate or any other official document, he or she will have to travel to the central government office, go to different offices and spend a lot of time for a simple service. The consequences are high costs and citizen and business dissatisfaction. An eGovernment initiative, on the other hand, which puts government services online, thereby reducing the bureaucracy, offers round the clock accessibility, fast and convenient transactions, and obviously enhances the quality of services, in terms of time, content and accessibility.

Transparency, Anticorruption and Accountability: EGovernment helps to increase the transparency of decision-making processes. In many cases eGovernment offers opportunities for citizens to directly participate in decision-making, by allowing them to provide their own ideas and suggestions in forums and on-line communities. If web sites are designed carefully and openly, they can be valuable resources for transparency as citizens, businesses and other stakeholders should be able to see political and governmental information, rules and policies. Previously it was often necessary to go directly to government offices to obtain information, but now this information should be available on the web. The availability of a diversity of publications regarding the activities of the public administration, as well as economic and legislative aspects, increases the transparency too.

Network and Community Creation: ICT creates both pressures and opportunities for network creation and community building. As argued before, an eGovernment initiative requires a complex web of interrelationships among government, customers, businesses, employees and other governmental agencies. Moreover, the very nature and function of eGovernment require a network approach to put together skills, technologies, information and knowledge that span the boundaries of different governmental agencies. It is generally impossible to find all of them in one single governmental agency.

Improve the Quality of Decision Making: Community creation, forums, continuous interaction and communication between government and its citizens contribute further to the decision making process. By means of active participation in political and government discussions, citizens can contribute their own ideas, and share their knowledge and information. This will in turn lead to building trust in government and improving the relationships between the government and the governed.

(E-mail:sharmaarpita35@gmail.com)
Our Country For Everyone

Hamara Hindustan

The ONLY wall decoration that the office of Yojana has is a wall map of India. It catches the attention of almost 'every one who comes' to see us. It is a beautifully printed map, five and a half feet by five feet, the work of the able men of the Survey of India. We know of some visitors who break off in the middle of a sentence and walk across to the map.

Maps are always fascinating things. A good map of one's own country never fails to quicken one's heart beat. Seeing it is like hearing the national anthem or catching a glimpse of the flag fluttering from a proud mast-head.

"Where can one get this map?" I have often been asked.

"Try the Government bookshop on Janpath."

"I went there once, but drew a blank. This sort of map should be on sale in every bookshop."

I have had many conversations like these. And I was reminded of them when, wandering round Connaught Place bookshops last fortnight, I saw a title which read "School Atlas"-blue letters on a chocolate-brown surface. I picked up the book, excited by it. It was printed beautifully. The colours and the lettering and the layout were all of the very first order.

At the outset there are plates illustrating geographical terms and methods. Next come maps of the world-and of the continents-both political and physical. Then, from page 20 to page 46, are maps of India. The first depicts the physical features. The second depicts the different States, and Union Territories in the various colours of the rainbow. An added attraction, it also shows the new dams and reservoirs of free India-Govind Sagar, Hirakud, Nagarjuna Sagar, Tungabhadra and Gandhi Sagar.) After that follow maps showing the roads and the air routes, and the railways and sea routes. Soils, population, forests and irrigated areas, archaeology and tourism, and rainfall are the subjects of five other maps. Then there are 46 smaller maps-four to a page-which give temperatures, geology and, minerals, distribution of individual crops and the location of major and minor industries.

What follows is an even more valuable section-detailed maps, of the different regions and States (incorporating the latest changes of name and spelling). An excellent idea on the part of those who planned the atlas is to devote three pages to the maps of our neighbouring countries-Ceylon, Nepal, Burma, China, Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is followed up by another feature deserving congratulations-a two-page spread which is called "The Great Himalaya" showing the entire region from the Salt Ranges in West Pakistan to the Trijunction (point where India, China and Burma meet) in the east. Here, for all Indians to see, is where we exactly stand when attempts are being made to nibble at our territory.

This is the kind of map that should be in every school and every family. The Survey of India's motto is "Asetu Himachalam", and the atlas should be found in every place between the sea in the south and the mighty mountains in the north.

A good atlas has of late become unbuyable: some foreign atlases have rightly not been allowed to be sold in the country because they either show Kashmir as a "territory under dispute" or magnanimously give parts of Kashmir to Pakistan. The result is that all sorts of mushroom mapmakers spring up, print story stuff and make money.

The best way to end, such a situation is to make available the right type of product in large numbers. Parents and teachers are waiting for this to happen.

This is only one part of the story. There is another. We talk of emotional integration. We say the people of one region should know more about the people of another. A sure way of achieving this is through the wise use of the song, the flag and the map. The young boy bending over and peering into a map travels in his imagination all over the country. If he is from Satara he hops to Shimla. Each lad in his mind does what Sankaracharya did a thousand years ago, physically touch the four, corners of the country. That gives him a feeling that all the land was his, all parts of it. He will bathe in all the rivers, climb all the hills, see the waterfalls, swim in all the beaches, roll in the meadows, wander in the forests, ride the elephants of Assam, frolic with the lions of Gir and pluck the flowers beside the Dal Lake. A good atlas is, a present that boys treasure most, and intelligent elders know it. But if a mere 15,000 copies are brought out, a fine tool is wasted, and an opportunity is lost.

H.Y.S.

Excerpts from the June 10, 1962 issue of YOJANA
Towards an Appropriate System of Governance

**Dharampal**

In India poverty has many causes. The basic causes are historical. Yet it may be added that, this poverty, as is commonly assumed, does not go back to prehistory, or dates back to the past thousand years. This poverty, in fact, is just about two centuries old. According to contemporary British accounts the wages of agricultural labour in the regions of eastern UP and Bihar, even as late as 1800, when poverty was fast getting entrenched in this area, were, in real terms, somewhat higher than such wages in England. The life in this area consequently presented a different picture to what is generally assumed. According to William Hodges, a prominent British painter who travelled through eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar during 1781-83, “A surprising spirit of cleanliness is to be observed among the Hindus: the streets of their villages are commonly swept and watered, and sand is frequently strewed before the doors of the houses.”

The major ingredients of this poverty, which prevail even now, are the disruption of the rights of the actual cultivator of land, the mounting unemployment because of induced decline in rural industry as well as agriculture, the neglect of irrigation sources as well as of soil conservation practices, the denuding of forest land as well as the diminution of village common lands, and arising from them the decline of the physical and the moral stamina of the affected people. Finally, the social disruption which resulted from British policies made these ingredients as seemingly normal attributes of the Indian scene and thus to be lived with forever. Further, the course of events has intertwined all these ingredients in such a manner that even to those who aspire to alter the situation, the problem has begun to look as if it is beyond the powers even of a Rama, or Krishna to untangle.

But poverty, and its amelioration, has been talked about for nearly a century, and much public resolves and plans made to eradicate it during the past three decades. Why is it that we don’t seem to make even a dent on it? But besides this poverty and its ingredients mentioned above, there is another ingredient in the

The author was an important Gandhian thinker, historian and political philosopher.
situation. This is the ingredient of the administrative political structure which lays down and governs most of our public activity. It is not only its alien foundations and present-day irrelevance of its approach, procedures and rules, which make it (not necessarily deliberately but because of its constitution) our greatest stumbling block, but also its basic contrariness to our current aims that vitiates all that we attempt. This structure arose to satisfy British colonial requirements and was founded on the then prevailing British political and administrative concepts. During a century of getting the maximum out of the Indian countryside (irrespective of where this drain led, whether to Britain, or to the conquest of further areas, or to the Presidency towns, or to them all, is immaterial here), while at the same time keeping the Indians subdued and over-awed, this system assumed a life of its own.

Subsequently, while the concepts and the systems got altered in the ruler’s own land (i.e., Great Britain), here it froze and has more or less remained in this state for nearly a century. By the beginning of this century it had become too heavy and cumbersome and practically useless even for British purposes. Hence the British ideas of decentralisation, the Montague Chelmsford reforms, and the post-1920 legislative and local level bodies. The Montague Chelmsford Reforms report observed: “Complaints were heard also that the prevalent unrest was due in part to loss of touch between officials and the people. The district officer was said to be too closely bound by rules and regulation; too much occupied in writing to his official superiors; too much of a machine and too little of a personality.” As no fundamental changes were made at the existing centres of governmental power, notwithstanding such insight, the reforms, which came in 1920, met the same fate as earlier or later British attempts at reform. The post-1947 years while greatly adding to the bulk, by the multiple increase in the departments of the government as well as its personnel have merely added to its woodenness and frigidity.

The problems we face are neither God-given nor insurmountable. They are the consequence of previous political acts and therefore, given the necessary thought and will, are capable of being solved by political and allied means.

It is true that the endeavour required is great. Further human beings tend to be indolent and do not like to be disturbed even when the situation they are in is none too pleasing. In groups such a feeling is even more pronounced and the governmental system is no exception. Those working for the governmental machinery no doubt will feel anxious, even perturbed, by any unexplained alteration in the manner, or the place of their functioning. Even after explanation and realising the relevance and value of the alterations, to society as well as to themselves, some may still resist them. But today it is not only the ministers who feel suffocated and useless. A large section, perhaps an overwhelming section, of the administrative as well as the technical set-up experiences such suffocation and uselessness. Perhaps the ministers do have a practice of periodically visiting the various departments which function under them and discussing with them about the work they produce as well as the problems they face. If they have such personal acquaintance and dialogue with those who work under their charge, they must be aware that much of what they themselves feel is also shared by large sections of the governmental establishment. If they already have no such acquaintance it is not too soon that they begin to be better acquainted with all that over which they preside.

To make the system purposive and to improvise alterations to achieve such an end it is not necessary to be punitive to individuals. What is required is that the machinery of government is reorganised according to some well thought out principles, appropriate rules and procedures laid down and the necessary resources and personnel provided to perform the assigned task. Resources or personnel should be allotted to areas which lack them; those which have a superfluity of either or both, should be left with only what is required; and whatever is found redundant (it may have been of great utility at some other period, quite possibly) shut down. With the tasks before us (full employment, literacy, health and social services) no one already in employment unless the person is wholly disruptive, need be turned out. Only people’s assignment and the location of their work may need to be altered. For many, such change once adopted may be quite welcome. Yet, some, to begin with, may find it a real hardship. All this, of course, will require attending to. For instance, all those who are moved away from the secretariat
complexes to district, taluka or village situations may be provided certain incentives (increased personal and family allowances, adequate medical facilities, help toward housing, honourable mention for adaptability to the new tasks, etc.). Those who show preference for working in their native districts, and in cases where such work as suits their individual capacities is available, should certainly have such preferences sympathetically considered. In fact, it is time we abandoned this colonial practice of forcing most government servants to work in areas far away from the areas in which they were born and bred, or of periodically transferring them from place to place. It seems that it is not only the system which is wooden but our own minds have begun to conform to it too.

Once the need of major alterations in the system to solve the most pressing problems as well as to give ourselves a functioning polity is agreed upon, there may be several ways to bring it about. To start with the cabinet and ministerial committees themselves can decide upon more apparent and urgent alterations. Secondly, the Cabinet can ask such officers, who have competence in such matters, to draw up plans for needed alteration in the whole set-up or in particular departments. Thirdly, services of professional consultant bodies specialising in organisational matters can be invited to advise the government on the right organisation for the given task. Fourthly, and along with the above, the government perhaps should constitute a high-powered body with academic and administrative expertise as well as having an adequate awareness of the requirements of Indian society to examine the whole system of governance and suggest an alternate appropriate framework.

But it is not only the administrative structure which requires restructuring. The working of the legislative structure requires equal attention. For the past 30 years most of those elected, whether at the gram panchayat level or at the level of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, have felt themselves useless as well as frustrated. The existing in-built devices like provision of family accommodation for members of Parliament and state legislatures in capital cities (unheard of in other countries of the Commonwealth at least) further alienates them from their home areas and adds to their sense of futility. How to make our legislatures (or, for that matter panchayats etc.) more purposeful and their members near equal participants requires much thought. One possible device, amongst others, which may be worth considering is to divide the legislature, for most of its deliberations, into several standing committees (or call them what one may) each of which is entrusted with the immediate responsibility (general supervision including attending to questions etc, formulation, processing and considering of new enactments etc.) of a particular ministry or ministries. Only at the final stages (like the third reading in the British House of Commons, there may be similar practices in many other countries) need the whole House consider any issue, or enactment.

As most of our surplus resources as well as human talent is largely appropriated by this system, it becomes all the more imperative that before we can make any appreciable dent in the first two, this system must be so altered that it is aroused from its stupor, becomes conscious of its responsibilities, avoids waste as do many of its masters in their personal lives, and is geared to the performance of tasks which are expected from it. Today whatever little is achieved in the general sphere is after expending tremendous efforts. Though hard work and concern for personal problems are valuable qualities in any ruler, they alone are not enough at least today. What we need much more is deeper deliberation and the questioning of all that we have begun to accept unthinkingly. It is this unthinking behaviour which is the major road-block in our path.

This is an extract from an article published in The Indian Nation, Patna, 1977.

[Dharampal (1922–2006), authored The Beautiful Tree (1983), Indian Science and Technology in the Eighteenth Century (1971) and Civil Disobedience and Indian Tradition (1971), among other seminal works, which have led to a radical reappraisal of conventional views of the cultural, scientific and technological achievements of Indian society at the eve of the British conquest. He also made some incisive socio-political statements of relevance for post-Independence India, one of which, originally written in 1977, is being republished here with permission from his daughter Prof. Gita Dharampal Frick, Professor, Dept. of History, University of Heidelberg, Germany.]

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WINTER BRINGS BACK TOURISTS TO THE VALLEY

Despite the off-season, about 64,000 tourists have visited Kashmir in September and 69,000 in October. “The number could be somewhere 60,000-70,000 in November. We are expecting the figure to pick up during December and January when there will be good snowfall,” an official of the Tourism Department said. And it is not just domestic tourists, even foreigners are visiting the Valley. The number of foreign tourists to Kashmir in September, according to Tourism Department records, is 2,950 while the figure was 2,864 in October. People associated with tourism said that last two years of peace in the Valley have contributed to the more tourist arrivals. “There is a huge rush and we have bookings till January.

Tourists are undeterred by the prevalent chill. Basharat Ahmad, a boat house owner, termed the recent lifting of two-decade-old travel advisory by the United Kingdom for its nationals as a good omen for the tourism industry in Kashmir. To attract tourists in winters, the Tourism Department has been organising winter tourism promotional programmes in Gulmarg for the last couple of years. These events start from mid-December and continue till late February.

The tourism industry people want the government to organise these events early to attract more tourists during winter season. “The Tourism Department should organise snow festivals not only in Gulmarg but also in Srinagar and other tourist destinations to ensure tourist inflow to the valley during the winter months,” said Mohammad Abbas, a hotelier in Gulmarg.

He said such events have been highly beneficial to them. “A lot of tourists who are interested in winter sports visited Gulmarg last year. The number is increasing and we hope a bumper winter tourist season in Gulmarg this year.”

With the forecast of a further dip in temperatures and more snowfall in the next two months, Kashmir is gearing to host thousands of tourists in December and January. Gulmarg is the main skiing resort for adventure lovers. Some of the best slopes in the country for beginners and intermediate skiers are available at Gulmarg. The slopes in Gulmarg vary between 8,700 and 10,500 feet and are the highest in India.

GAS SUPPLY PROJECT IN JAMMU & KASHMIR

The proposed Bhatinda-Jammu-Srinagar Gas Pipeline Project (BJSSPL) is expected to be completed by July 2014.

The gas pipeline which will bring gas supply from Gujarat to Jammu & Kashmir will consist of a 328 kilometre long main gas trunk from Bhatinda to Srinagar passing through Kathua, Samba, Jammu, Udhampur, Ramban, Anantnag, Pulwama and Srinagar. There will be hundreds of sub-lines which will supply gas to the consumers at their houses.

This project is of great importance to the State as it will provide adequate domestic and commercial supply of gas to the consumers on cheaper rates besides creating huge employment for youth of the State.
CORRUPTION IS one of the most serious consequences of poor governance. A country with widespread corruption invariably has low investment rates, poor economic growth and limited human development. There are few countries in the world, like Indonesia, Kenya, Angola, Madagascar, Paraguay, Nigeria, Bangladesh, and India—where it pervades every corner of public life. The public will find the cost of delivering this service inordinately high. Corruption has no positive effects. It hits the poor hardest, it makes a mockery of financial systems and it actively works against the legitimacy of the state. Poverty, development, growth and investment—all suffers at the hands of corruption. Its effects are extremely damaging, far reaching and all pervasive. For India, the world’s largest democracy, it is a painful irony that despite a good foundation of democratic institutions, she has a score of only 2.7 out of 10 in 2002, was ranked 71st out of 102 countries for corruption. As per Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index (2005), India scored 2.9 out of 10. Since then, her ranking has kept falling. A survey conducted by Transparency International cites India as far worse than China and refers to her as a country where bribery and corruption are among the worst in the world. In a developing country, resources are always scarce and demand greater than supply. The recipients of public services are mostly the poor, illiterate, ignorant and weak. Thus it is the ordinary men who suffer most from misgovernment and corruption. In India, even the highly educated lack the power to protest. There is no accountability or transparency among public servants. It is difficult to define corruption. There is no consensus on the definition of corruption, because what is perceived to be a corrupt activity is based on a society’s acceptance and level of tolerance. Corruption is generally defined as a kind of illegitimate favor for immediate or future personal gain for doing an official work which one is supposed to do free of charge and objectivity. In most of the developing countries, corruption is like a virus. It has infected almost every social and economic activity.

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It is very necessary to introduce social auditing in all public related works, which is one important measure of combating corruption.
Conceptual Framework of Participatory Development - In December 1989, the organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) released a “policy statement on development cooperation in the 1990s”. It cited sustainable development, concern for the environment, and participatory development as the most important issues on the development aid agenda for the 1990s. Addressing the importance of participatory development, it states that 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. This strategy is premised on four essential approaches, like as –

a) investment in human resources in the broad sense, including education and training, meeting the needs for food and health care, and efforts to eradicate AIDS and narcotics problems;

b) strengthening of political system, government mechanisms, and legal systems in which democracy and respect of human rights are secured;

c) effective use not only of central governments, but also of local organizations and self government, nongovernmental organization (NGOs), and the private sector; and

d) the establishment of open and competitive market economy structure to mobilize individual initiative and dynamic private enterprise.

The objective of economic and social development in developing countries is to set in motion a process of self – reliant and sustainable growth through which social justice can be achieved. Development within a developing society aims at building into society the mechanisms that will ultimately permit self – reliant growth without foreign assistance, at sustaining stable growth patterns for economic development in harmony with the environment, and at providing equal and appropriate opportunities to take part in development to overcome income gaps, regional disparities, and inequalities between men and women. For this to be possible, the central focus of development is not necessarily to boost production of material goods; instead, it should be to foster and enhance people’s capability to have a role in their society’s development. To this end, people should be willingly involved in a wide range of development activities, as agents and beneficiaries of development. It is this participation that is important. Participatory development as an approach to development that is designed to enhance sustainability and self – reliance and to achieve social justice through improvements in the quality of people’s participation.

Participatory development is not an attempt to replace the top down development approach with a local community – led approach. Rather it is a view point that simultaneously stresses the need for the government led approach in terms of national level economic planning and coordination of development planning and the demerits of widening disparities and worsening poverty inherent in that approach when used alone. Participatory development attempts to introduce a bottom – up style of development in order to remedy the government – led approach’s shortcoming, specifically by focusing on qualitative improvements in local society’s participation.

This participation must not be transient; it must entail the sustainable upgrading of participation quality. For this to happen, the underlying conditions must be met to facilitate the long term process of participation and its self – reliant sustainability. The long term process of participation is raising the awareness of local people, forming community groups, upgrading their requisite resource management abilities, to strengthen Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad, providing full autonomy to local governments, creating norms or internalizing their mechanisms and improving capabilities for external negotiations. The shaping and planning of this participatory process requires both a long term vision and willingness to selectively improve and bolster traditional community systems as tools of development.

Conceptual Framework of Good Governance - The philosophy of good governance has its origin dated back to the early days of human civilization. The description of Indus Valley and Vedic civilizations bear the details of the concept. Today the term ‘Governance’ has come to occupy a central place in the development discourse. Among the several development strategies governance is considered as an important element. There are many means of achieving good result in governance. Traditional texts such as Upanishads and in later period Kautilya’s ‘Arthashatra’delinate many methods of achieving the
good results with has gained new momentum after the collapse of the totalitarian states in East European countries and the cry for democracy in several developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The term government and governance appear synonymous in dictionary. Government refers to formal and institutional processes which operate at the level of nation state to maintain public order and facilitate collective action. It is a formal institution of the state with their monopoly of legitimacy, coercive power. It refers to various forms of political system or the manner in which state exercises its power in utilizing socio-economic resources. Governance signifies new process of governing or changed condition of ordered rule of new method by which society is governed. Rhodes defined governance in eight ways. They are minimal state, governance according to private enterprise model, new public management, good governance, a social cybernetic system and a series of self organized social network. The Commission on Global Governance defines governance as “governance is the sum of many ways individuals and institutions, public and private manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflicting and diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative action taken. Governance is the creation of structure or an order, which cannot be extremely imposed but is the result of the interaction of multiplicity of governing and each others influencing actors.” The Human Development Report, 2002 has given a new perspective to governance by terming it as democratic governances, which is essential for better human development.

Now a days the term ‘good governance’ is very much in vogue. Three major International bodies focus on different aspects. As the World Bank defined in 1994: ‘good governance is epitomized by predictable, open and enlighten policy making; a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos; on executive arm of government accountable for its actions and a strong civil society participating in public affairs; and all behaving under the rule of law’. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) takes a broader view of good governance as comprising mechanism processes and institution through which citizens and groups articulate there interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their legal obligations, and mediate their differences. The Economic and Social council for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) similarly considers governance good only if genuine steps to minimize corruption are taken; if the views of the minorities and the voices of the most vulnerable sections of society in decision making is ensured, and if it is responsive to the present and future needs of a society. It has identified eight salient features of good governance: i) participatory in nature, ii) consensual in orientation iii) accountable iv) transparent v) responsive vi) effective and efficient vii) equitable and inclusive viii) rule of law.

i) Participation - Participation of the people either direct or indirect in the development and decision making process is one of the corner stone of good governance. The availability of people to participate in social decisions is a valuable characteristic feature of good society. It is intimately connected with demands of equity. It also plays a crucial role in the recognition of societal values and in generating public understanding. The participation in order to be effective needs to be informed and organized and therefore depends upon the availability to the subjects, freedom of association and expression on one hand and existence of an organized civil society on the other.

ii) Consensual in orientation - Good governance must ensure that there a regular and dynamic process of consensus making. That is first of all there should be consultation between the government functionaries, NGOs and the public; second stage should be consideration of different views; third stage should be taking their consent on a broad area; and finally consensus should be attempted after conflict resolution.

iii) Accountability - Third feature of good governance is accountability – that is from policy – makers to implementers all should be held responsible for their omissions and commissions. Every body at the helm of affairs should be answerable for allocation, use and control of public fund and other assets.

iv) Transparency - The attribute of transparency requires that information is freely available and the decisions are taken or enforced in a manner that adheres to the rules and
regulations. It also means that enough information is provided and that it is provided in easily understandable forms and media.

v) **Responsiveness** - The attribute of responsiveness for good governance necessitates that all public institutions and their processes strive to serve all stakeholders within a responsible time frame.

vi) **Effective and efficient** - Sixth feature of good governance is efficiency and effectiveness. Efficiency means doing works at a first speed and effectiveness means doing things effectively focusing on results. Thus both timelines and result orientation are to be ensured.

vii) **Equitable and inclusive** - A society’s well being depends mostly on ensuring that all its members feel that they have a stake in it and do not feel excluded from the mainstream of society. This requires all groups, particularly the most vulnerable, have opportunities to improve or maintain their well being.

viii) **Rule of law** - The last feature of good governance is the rule of law, i.e. every body is equal before the law, on the one hand, and there should be justice system through due process of law for all, on the other hand. It means that all rules and regulations should be similar to all the citizens in similar circumstances.

**Relationship between Participatory Development and Good Governance** - Participatory development and good governance are related in the following way: participatory development, with its central focus on raising the quality of participation by local societies and thus better achieving self-reliant and sustainable development and social justice, is one important form of people oriented development. Good governance is the foundation of participatory development in as much as it provides the government functions needed to promote participation and create the environment in which participatory processes take place.

Good governance as a function of government does not refer solely to support for participatory development; as participatory processes evolve, good governance develops into such functioning that supports wider and more mature people’s participation. In this sense, participatory development promotes good governance in its turn. The projection of the concept of good governance onto the national system an orientation of a state – then progressively boosts people’s trust in their government, inasmuch as, through good governance, government services improve in effectiveness and efficiency. Thus in the long run, good governance evolves into stronger aspirations for further democratization. The strength of a state’s desire for democracy also influences the process of formation of political and administrative structures and government’s capability to translate this national stance into action. In turn, this, too, influences the evolution of participatory development. Participatory development and good governance are consequently interrelated, as are the two component elements of good governance, the ideal orientation of the state and the ideal functioning of government.

**Corruption is a challenge to Participatory development and good governance** - India is a world’s largest democracy. The survival of Indian democracy for well over six decades despite the country’s diversities is in many ways a remarkable achievement. However, no one can deny that the country’s contemporary socio-economic and political problems are complex. There are a number of serious problems that need to be met in the years ahead. These main problems are: i) divisive tendencies, ii) extremism, iii) unemployment, iv) regionalism, v) illiteracy, vi) corruption and nepotism. Out of these problems, corruption and nepotism are the major problem of our country today. Many of us have simply accepted it as a sad reality. But unless we are able to fight corruption, the benefits of development can never be sheared equitably and democratically.

The starting point of corruption in public offices seems to be in the political arena beginning with electoral corruption. The general election decide who rules over more than 120 crores Indians. The political parties in their quest for power spend more than thousand crores of rupees on the Lok Sabha election yet nobody accounts for the bulk of the money so spent and there is no accountability anywhere. Nobody discloses the sources of the money. There are no proper accounts and no audit. From where does the money come nobody know. Electoral corruption in India seems to have increased in recent years primarily because of high cost of campaigning and questionable practices indulged in by the political parties. The absence of proper regulation and monitoring
of the expenses both by candidates and the parties has given rise to a widespread criticism that electoral corruption has been increasing over the years without any effective monitoring. Report highlights that the cost of conducting the Lok Sabha election has been estimated to be close to Rs. 1100 crores. The figure for similar estimated expenditure for conducting election to the Lok Sabha in 2004 has approximately Rs. 1093.06 crores. Out of this government money every general election spent more and more money by the political parties, which is not accountable. 70 percent of the populations live in the rural India. Rural India continues to suffer from resource deficits in such basic spheres as health, education, drinking water, sanitation, housing and infrastructure. There are corruption within the NREGS and the Indira Awas Yojana. Mr. Mohit Sen, a member of the Planning Commission, has remarked that the Rural Employment Guarantee scheme suffers from low potential. The fanfare with which no fewer than 100 centrally sponsored schemes with in allocation of Rs. 137000 crores (2010 -2011) were announced had raised hopes of accelerated rural development, conversion of liabilities into assets and reduction of social and economic disfrntis between the rural and urban population. The programme were focused on poverty alleviation, universal education, employment, healthcare, infrastructure, drinking water, sanitation, social security, rural electrification, urban renewal mission, housing and rural connectivity. The benefits of these flagship schemes have not trickled down to the targeted beneficiaries due to of corruption.

Panchayati Raj Institution is a backbone of the rural development in India. Panchayati Raj Institution is an institution which empowered rural people and increased mass participation in development process. All centrally sponsored and state schemes are implemented by the Panchayati Raj Institution in rural India. But due to corruption in Panchayats functionaries, benefits of all programmes do not reach actual beneficiaries in rural India and people are not interested to participate in development works. Similarly people who live in urban areas are not interested to participate in development works.

**Anti – Corruption measures in India -** Indian democracy has taken various measures for anti – corruption in public life. Government of India set up Special Police Establishment (SPE) in 1941, to investigate cases of bribery and corruption. On April, 1963, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was set up. The CBI plays a supplementary rule to the states police forces. The cases which essentially and substantially involve central government employees or their officers, or certain state government employees are referred to the CBI. CBI can also take up cases against employees of statutory bodies or public undertakings established and financed by the government in India.

The Administrative Reforms Commission recommended in 1966 the adaption of the Ombudsman type of institution in India. The Congress government under Mrs. Indira Gandhi proposed to set up the institution of 'Lokpal 'at the central level, but the bill lapsed in1971. This bill introduced in Parliament in many times in 1977, 1985, 1989, 1998, 2001and in a strong form in 2011. Government of India drafted the bill and tabled in Lok Sabha in 2011. But this bill even today is...
hung due to the unwillingness of our parliamentarians.

The government of India introduced Public Procurement Bill in Lok Sabha to check corruption and ensure transparency in public procurement. The bill seeks to regulates award of government contracts of over Rs. 50 lakh with the object of ensuring ‘transparency, accountability and probity’. The bill of objects and reasons will codify the basic norms to regulate public procurement and provide for deferring bidders found engaged in corrupt practices. The bill also provide for Jail term ranging from six month to five years for public servants found guilty of demanding and accepting bribes from bidders of government contracts.

**Conclusion and suggestions for combating corruption** - Corruption is not something that a government on its own can eradicate. In any case political leaders simply use it as a quick, easy way to win votes, making catchy slogans for suits their political interests. Prime ministers from the late Gulzari Lal Nanda to Dr. Manmohan Singh declared a war on corruption but achieved absolutely nothing. The first condition of combating the corruption in public life is to educate all people of India. Right to Education Act (2009) is a landmark initiative of the government to strengthen the education system in India. It provides free and compulsory education to all children between 6 to 14 age groups. This act made it mandatory to guardian of a child to send their child to nearby school for education. So, Right to Education is able to educate everyone who is able to combat corruption. Value education is needed for combating corruption. India is a land of tremendous contrasts, not least in the way she cherishes such values as sacrifice and spirituality points proudly to their prominent place in her past and boasts of her rich cultural heritage of honesty and purity. Today in the era of globalization it is very necessary to cultivate this type of value added education which makes honest mind of people; those are able to combat corruption.

The Right to Information Act is a strong measure to combat corruption in public life. It explains in information as any material in any form, including records, documents means, emails, opinions, advices, press releases, circulars, orders, log books, contracts, reports, papers, samples, modules, data material held in any electronic form and information relating to any private body which can be assessed by a public authority under any other law for the time being in force. So it is able to combat public officers from corruption.

**Monopoly power of the bureaucrats** is required to be reduced. Mass participation in development process is able to control the bad works of the bureaucrats. It is not desirable to give a full authority to an individual official. Officials should be given competing jurisdiction. It may so happen that a client is not well served by an official. He may go to another competitor which will tend to drive the levels of bribes to zero.

Another effective way to reduce corruption is to generate an incentive and appropriate pay structure for public officials. To give them Dearness allowances (D.A) at time in parity with current market. On the other hand it is also necessary to give appropriate incentives and pay structure to elected representatives of central, State and local level governments. At present, Parliamentarians and Legislators of some states have taken handsome incentive and pay. But Local government representatives do not receive this type of incentive or pay. It is necessary to give them this type of remuneration as same as Parliamentarian and state Legislators are received.

Corruption is a syndrome that affects modern societies and governments. It is an obstacle to development. In this area the media has been solely responsible for curbing adventurous officials and politicians from dipping into the till which is intended to meet development needs. Investigative Journalism is responsible for nipping in the bud many a corrupted person.

It is very necessary to take initiative of civil society for combating corruption from public life. Anna Hazare’s movement against corruption makes a new dimension among civilians in India. Government is also today trying to takes same initiative by passing a strong law for combating corruption.

It is very necessary to introduce social auditing in all public related works, which is one important measure of combating corruption from public life. Free and frank people participation in local institutions able to reduce corruption will from people life by the process of social auditing. (E-mail: bappa_anil@rediffmail.com)
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The Impact of e-Governance on Good Governance

C Krishnan

WITH THE advent of Information Communication Technologies (ICT), governance has entered into a new sphere of globalization. Previously online and offline governance were treated as two different spheres but with the emergence of ICT, this distinction has been blurred. There is a common assumption of e-government as the automation of government services, yet, there is much more to e-government. A working definition of e-government is that it is: "the use of information technology to support government operations, engage citizens, and provide government services" (D. Sharon, 2003). The creation of this new cyber regime must incorporate good e-governance to deliver effectively and efficiently to citizens. The Government 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 government services to citizens, business and other stakeholders. It has been recognized that a quantum jump in the quality of services is possible only by adoption and implementation of the principles of e-Governance. While initially the political and managerial focus was on developing e-services within each public institution, with limited consideration being given to cross-organizational coherence, the focus today has clearly shifted towards coordinated services offering one-stop shops to citizens and businesses (OECD 2007). In this context, this study has been carried out to examine the impact of an urban e-governance project of a South Indian State on good governance.

Attempts on e-Governance in India

India was one of the earliest to respond to the possibilities of using ICTs in development administration in the developing world. It may be noted that the Indian State began to design and execute rural development programmes with a relatively visible ICT content in the 1970s, while international attention on the potential of harnessing ICTs for developmental activities is a

The author is Associate Professor in Economics, Government College, Kodanchery, Kozhikode, Kerala.
much new phenomenon. Several attempts have been made to use ICTs for improvising development planning, a key area of State action in the pre-liberalisation era. The Dharampur Sub-District Infrastructure Planning for Development (1977) is one such early example of an attempt to use computer applications for cost optimization and decision-making. The Karwar Rural Development Information System (1984) was yet another initiative formulated with a focus on reducing delay and curbing corruption through a monitoring programme based on computer applications (Kaul. et. al, quoted in Bhatnagar, 1990).

‘Electronic governance’ became a key phrase in the Indian State’s efforts to provide a facelift to its administrative machinery in late 1990s. It is now geared for ‘good governance’ as part of the structural adjustment strategies dictated by the World Bank and other international agencies. Since the institution of the Ministry of Information Technology, the central government has shown substantial interest in using IT for various objectives. The surging numbers of what is identified as e-governance projects since 1999 indicate that most of the State governments and Union Territories in India claim to have accepted the need for undertaking e-governance initiatives.

E-Governance initiatives in Kerala

In Kerala, since Government is very much a part of common man’s life, Information Technology, has been a natural choice for the Government. In the State, the introduction of ICT in Government-citizen interaction has been more gradual rather than making a sudden impact on the G2C landscape. States’ first IT policy announced in 1998 delineates reaching ICT to the common man, as one of the four focus areas. The state though subsequently gave thrust on promoting IT industry base, its primary focus on citizen services was still the underlying thread in ICT interventions (Baby, 2006).

The State of Kerala has shown remarkable progress on all indicators of social development. Kerala has a much thought out and much discussed policy for the ICT enabling also. Kerala is among the front-runners in implementing e-governance in India. Introduction of e-governance and the use of computers in the government of Kerala may be traced back to the 1950s (Planning commission, GOI, 2008). Kerala was the first State government in the country to come out with IT policies aimed at co-coordinating and accelerating the pace of IT and E-governance projects. In 1998, the policies were focused mainly on creation of IT infrastructure in data communication and IT education. In 2001, policies were broader and covered industries like Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) and provided for liberalization of labour laws. The IT Policy (2006-07) envisages making each citizen of Kerala a creative participant and contributor of the Knowledge Society through the use of ICT. The IT Policy 2012 has also underlined the commitment of the Government in spreading the wings of e-governance in all walks of life.

Given the basic premise that Government should adopt ICT for citizen services, a quick glance at the proven models of service delivery using ICTs in Kerala shall reveal a promising scenario. Major achievements of Kerala in the e-governance front during the past years include India’s first fully computerised Panchayats, India’s first fully computerised Collectorate, FRIENDS initiative to serve 35 lakh families, first largest deployment of wireless network in the World, significant development in local language computing, Akshaya’s total e-literacy programme, first Citizen’s Call Centre in the country, first complete e-literate district in the country etc. The State government has also initiated the ‘Information Kerala Mission’ project for the deployment of technology at the grassroots level as a model for participatory governance through effective use of IT.

Objectives of the present study

This study is carried out to examine the working of FRIENDS (Fast, Reliable, Instant, Effective Network for Disbursement of Service) implemented by the Information Technology Mission of Government of Kerala. The basic objective of the study is to examine the beneficiary perception about the programme and also to see how far the project has been successful in reducing the time and cost of availing public services.

Friends-the Concept

FRIENDS is based on the concept of using ICT for better citizen Government interface. It started off as a pilot project in June 2000 with a ‘collect and remit’ and ‘receive and forward’
principle. A year later, all 14 districts had one Center each. Though the idea of FRIENDS had its origin from the e-Seva project of Andhra Pradesh, there are some differences between the two. While the original inspiration for FRIENDS came from e-Seva, FRIENDS represents an attempt to promote single-point front-end service delivery without any real backend computerization. Nor does FRIENDS charge departments for effecting transactions on their behalf with the exception of the publicly-owned telecom company, BSNL. Unlike e-Seva, whose counters are staffed by employees hired by private partners, FRIENDS counters are staffed by employees appointed by parent departments. Centers, however, are not networked to each other or to individual departments. Unlike e-Seva, FRIENDS has not allowed its centers to be used for delivery of private services; nor has FRIENDS turned to advertising to generate revenue. In spite of the fact that FRIENDS is clearly more “basic” than e-Seva, an opinion survey commissioned by the World Bank in 2001 indicates that FRIENDS has struck a positive chord with Kerala’s citizen (Madon and Kiran, 2002).

The Table 1 summarizes the kind of services available with FRIENDS. The number of services is limited to these participating Government departments and in most cases there is some clause for effecting payments such as jurisdiction limits, bills without fine, etc…

### Trends in Collection and Transactions of FRIENDS

Table 2 is a testimony of the peoples’ faith in e-governance programmes like FRIENDS. From a mere Rs.568 lakhs in 2000-01, its collection has risen to Rs.23,500 lakhs. Similarly, the number of

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Participating Departments</th>
<th>Services</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL)</td>
<td>Telephone bill payment</td>
<td>Telephone bill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB)</td>
<td>Electricity bill payments (low tension and spot billing) of various electrical divisions.</td>
<td>Electricity bill invoice provided by KSEB (only without fine)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kerala Water Authority (KWA)</td>
<td>Spot bill</td>
<td>Bill invoice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>General water bills (domestic and non domestic) 5% discount for advance payment of at least one year.</td>
<td>Bill invoice, consumer card provided by KWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kerala University/ MG University/ Calicut university</td>
<td>University examination fees</td>
<td>Application form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Civil Supplies Department</td>
<td>Fees for civil rationing office related applications (license, permit, ration card etc…)</td>
<td>Application form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Motor Vehicles Department</td>
<td>1. Motor vehicle tax-105 types. 2. Fee for licenses from motor vehicles department-20 types. 3. Fees for permits from motor vehicle department- 142 type 4. One-time vehicle tax 5. Registration fee for motor vehicles</td>
<td>RC book, insurance papers, application forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Revenue Department</td>
<td>Building tax Basic tax Revenue recovery interest.</td>
<td>Application forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Electrical Inspectorate</td>
<td>Inspection Fee Licensing Fee Other Remittance</td>
<td>Application forms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: http://www.friendscenter.net
transactions increased from 1.24 lakhs to 3.52 lakhs during the period of study.

Why do people prefer FRIENDS Counter over Departmental Counters?

To the question of whether the respondents prefer FRIENDS counter over the Departmental outlets for utility payments, almost all of them prefer to pay at the FRIENDS. Gender-wise, women particularly prefer to be at FRIENDS for their public utility payments.

The information provided in the table-3 indicates that the prominent factors for utilising the FRIENDS counter for paying public utility bills over the Departmental counters are: its low cost and time saving mechanism, the queue system and its speedy and efficient functioning. It hence attests the fact that the objectives of the e-governance system are very much prevalent in the FRIENDS functioning.

Total Trips to be conducted to avail service

When the respondents were enquired about the details of the trips to be performed to avail services in the friends and Departmental counters, it is found that more number of trips is required to pay the bills in Departmental counters than in the FRIENDS counter. We have also conducted an independent t-test to examine whether there is any significant difference in the number of trips to be performed in availing services in FRIENDS and Departmental counters. The result shows significant difference as the t-value is 6.27 and p-value is 0.000

Cost of Availing Service

Data have been collected from the respondents about the cost incurred for availing service in both the Friends and Departmental counters and an independent t-test was applied to see whether there exists any significant difference in the cost of availing services from both the agencies. The results confirm significant difference ($t =10.58, p=0.000$) and hence conclude that the cost of availing service through e-governance system are lower than the traditional method.

Service time in Friends and Departments

We have also tested whether there is any significant difference between the two systems in terms of service time. The result shows significant difference between the two systems ($t =14.66, p=0.000$). Hence to conclude that the service time required at the Friends counters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount collected (in lakhs)</th>
<th>No of Transactions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>123709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>1305</td>
<td>1026919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>10619</td>
<td>2023811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>16000</td>
<td>2632137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>20210</td>
<td>3400182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>22170</td>
<td>3866948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>22747</td>
<td>4028287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>22289</td>
<td>3475795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>22601</td>
<td>3516571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>23006</td>
<td>3689870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>23500</td>
<td>3983887</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [www.friendscentre.net](http://www.friendscentre.net)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Weighted Score</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rank</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Save cost and time</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queue system</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>889</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speedy and Efficient</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly atmosphere</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to residence</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No corruption</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>VI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4: User’s perception on the various attributes of FRIENDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Total score</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Convenient Working hours of FRIENDS</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Suitable Location of the FRIENDS</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Queuing system at FRIENDS</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Low cost in availing service</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Less time and effort in availing service</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Excellent Service area facility</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Courtesy and knowledge of staff</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>VII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Commendable Speed and efficiency of</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>VIII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Low level of corruption</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>IX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Procedures are clear and simple</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Higher level of security of data</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>XI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Highly accountable officers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>XII</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Survey Data

are less than the departmental counters.

Overall Perception about the Project

The beneficiaries of Friends were asked to indicate their opinion about the three major factors they consider the most important attributes of the e-governance application. The important probable attributes of e-governance systems have been presented before them and they were asked to rank them.

From the table-4, it is seen that convenient working time is the first foremost attribute of the e-governance system they considered important. FRIENDS working time stretches from 9.0 a.m to 7.0 p.m and work even on holidays. Location of the FRIENDS counter is considered as the second attribute of the system. The FRIENDS counters are working in district headquarters easily connected with all transport system. The third attribute of the system as per the users point of view is the scientific queuing and display systems in practice at FRIENDS. It helps avoid standing on long queue under the hot sun or rain to avail a public service.

Concluding Observations

From the discussion, it is clear that e-governance initiatives like FRIENDS have been found successful in ensuring good governance. Studies of Krishnan (2010) and Madon and Kiran (2002), to mention a few, have brought into limelight the efficacy of FRIENDS in delivering public sector services at low cost in terms of time and money. However, the project is to be strengthened in several ways. In terms of addition of more services, there seems to be stagnation. Similarly, FRIENDS has not been able to provide the information services. In addition, the operational area of FRIENDS still confine to the district headquarters. The reluctance of the parent departments to spare staff to man FRIENDS counter is a real challenge of the project. The economic sustainability of the project is in peril as the beneficiary departments are unwilling to pay any service charges to FRIENDS and it continues to rely on an on-budget subsidy from government for operating costs. Departments argue, correctly, that they are already subsidizing FRIENDS by paying employee salaries. Finally, the absence of significant backend computerization or business process re-engineering in departments has made it difficult to expand the menu of government-offered services from bill and fee payments to more sophisticated transactions, such as certificates. Despite these limitations FRIENDS has proved meritorious service to the people at large.

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HE CONCEPT
“Good governance” is relatively a new term which has came to limelight in 1990s; however the principle of good governance is not new to the Indian society. While throwing attention over the state of affairs in ancient India, it is noticed that the king or the ruler was bounded by the dharma which precisely meant to ensure good governance to the people. “Rajadharma” 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 Mahabharat 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 Mourya 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 well-being of the people living on the earth and “Shastra” shows how the state administration should be carried out in the best interests of the people. The key elements of Kautilya’s policy are the protection, welfare and prosperity of the state and its people which is the utmost concern of the ruler. The perceptions and principles brought forward by Kautilya in this Shastra have universal appeal and applicability since it is based upon the fundamental principles of good governance, accountability and justice.

India is a country of great diversity with varied culture, dissimilar lifestyles, languages and population, and states having different levels of social and economic development. The well-being 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 (Kashyap, 2003).

India has given the message of universal brotherhood and tolerance to the whole world in the past. The National Freedom Movement of India was based upon the principle of nationalism, democracy, secularism, non-alignment, and free mixed economy. Mahatma Gandhi advocated the concept ‘Ram Rajya’ for India basing upon the principles of good governance which necessarily meant for dreaming India as a welfare state where the necessities of the down-trodden, the welfare of the commoner and their progress through indigenous industries would become the hallmark. After independence, the Indian Constitution has also been framed for securing justice, liberty, equality and empowering weaker sections including women, youth and poor, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes through making special provisions in the Indian Constitution. India’s experiences during the past six decades have clearly established that good governance in India aims at expansion of social and economic opportunities, removal of poverty and efficient delivery of services at the grassroots. For effective functioning of good governance, every citizen must be empowered and has right to be informed, express their views which must be heard and considered, participate in various decision-making processes of governance and contribute in meaningful ways.

The major characteristics of good governance as outlined by the United Nations are that the authority and its institutions are accountable, effective and efficient, participatory, transparent, responsive, consensus-oriented and equitable. The World Development Report 1997 has also underlined the effectiveness of the state as an essential pre-requisite for economic growth, eradication of poverty and hunger and sustainable development. The World Bank indicators of good governance encompass democracy, transparency and accountability which are the major yardsticks to measure the effectiveness and responsiveness of government administrations.

Features of Good Governance
- Good education facilities offered by the government having greater employability,
- Development of basic infrastructures like roads, bridges, power, telecom, airport, irrigation and transport
- Safety of public life, property, peaceful law and order,
- Creating new employment opportunities in the government and private sectors,
- Effectiveness and efficiency of working of government and its staffs,
- Good business environment with free-market economy,
- Reducing inequalities in the society through positive discrimination in favour of poorest of the poor
- Providing total freedom of speech, of religion, of work and attitude of non-interference by government.
- Provision of more concessions to citizens and free from bias,
- Good business environment and
- Citizen centric services.

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

Right to Information
The citizens are the center of democratic governance. Every citizen has right to participate in public life, governance and society. 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 has been enacted on 12th October, 2005 which marks a significant shift in the Indian democracy and ushered a new era of empowerment of 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 the 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 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 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 favourably with many developing countries though it has 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 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, proliferate 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. 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 criminalisation from politics and the seriousness of 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.

Conclusion

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 to accord primacy to the Gandhian principle of “Antodaya” to restore good governance in the country. In such circumstance, when the nation/state machineries become more efficient and accountable, the citizens can enjoy higher per capita income, wide spread literacy, adequate health facilities with longer average life.

After all, the good governance in the country can thrive only when every Indian citizen would ignite themselves in the flame of patriotism adhering to truth, peace and non-violence as means to perceive India of our dream. At this movement, every Indian should swear that the moral principles of our life should never be waved out by the money and muscle power. Let our moral strength succeed over material strength. Let’s learn from our past Indian heritage. Being responsible citizens of the country it is our foremost duty not to pledge a vote for deviants to ruin our nation rather to vote for the honest and upright citizens who can be good administrators and reformers to bring positive transformations and can lead our nation under their dynamic leadership.

(E-mail: chinusatpathy@gmail.com)
CENTRE PROPOSES 285-KM NH ON GUWAHATI-BARAK ROUTE

The Central Government has initiated a proposal for construction of a 285-km-long two-lane alternative national highway to connect Barak Valley with Guwahati via Harangajao-Turuk and Nellie, in its Modified SARDP-NE Programme. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has sanctioned an amount of Rs 87.60 lakh for conducting surveys etc., for the road.

Since the Baithalangsu-Raha portion of the proposed road has an intermediate lane, the Ministry of Road Transport has been requested to construct the road according to this alignment.

The Union Road Transport Ministry has also been requested to sanction a modified alignment plan between Amsoi Gate in Karbi Anglong and Baithalangsu.

At present work on preparation of the Detailed Project Report (DPR) and estimates for land acquisition is going on. It is expected that preparation of the estimate for land acquisition in Karbi Anglong, Nagaon and Morigaon districts for the purpose of building the road would be completed by April, 2013.

Steps would be taken in the first part of next year to send the DPR for construction of the road to the Central Government. Steps are also being taken to secure necessary permission from the environment and forest departments for the purpose.

GREEN ROADS OF ASSAM

From Green Buildings to Green Roads, Assam has begun its journey towards becoming one of the greenest and cleanest states in the country by using cold mix technology in which natural rubber latex is blended with bitumen emulsion.

Assam is a pioneering state in the country to have used cold mix technology in rural road construction and has so far constructed about 1500 kms, state PWD Minister Ajanta Neog has said.

The biggest advantage of the cold mix technology was that on an average in cold mix precious fossil fuels -- approximately 1500 litres of diesel per kilometre -- are saved and if over 1000 km of roads are constructed in a year in each state, the benefits would be enormous.

Assam Public Works Roads Department has launched a unique Green Roads Mission in association with the New Delhi-based Central Road Research Institute and Bitchem Asphalt Technologies Limited.

The Mission, among others, aims at achieving its objective of sustainable development and harnessing the socio-economic and environmental benefits of cold mix technology for rural roads and state roads to help the country benefit from prospective earning of carbon credits.

The cold mix technology is an impressive option to solve the problems of road connectivity in the state as various factors like heavy rainfall often delay the construction and maintenance of roads.

E-version

Employment News announces the launch of e-version of Rozgar Samachar (Urdu). It will be available free of cost on the Rozgar Samachar (Hindi) website from January 2013 to all readers. Readers can go to the website www.rojgarsamachar.gov.in, click on the link for e-version (Urdu) & enjoy reading Rozgar Samachar (Urdu) anytime & anywhere.
GOOD GOVERNANCE, in modern democracy, means democratization of governance. In participatory democracy people elect their leaders to govern them. But governance is not the monopoly of elected leaders. When governance becomes the privilege of select few or when the people who are governed are kept out of the affairs of governance, it degenerates into misgovernance and becomes a travesty of democracy.

Good governance is characterized by transparency and accountability and the best way to ensure transparency and accountability in governance is through increased and informed participation of people. People are biggest stakeholder in governance, they have a critical and crucial role to play. So, it is imperative that people must have the right to know about the activities of the government.

In 2005, Indian Parliament passed Right to Information Act [RTI] which gave the common citizen the right to seek information regarding government projects, schemes and other activities. It was a landmark Act which came with the potentiality to change the very idea of governance and the power equation between common people and the government. The act was promulgated with the vision of democratization of governance and empowerment of common people. Therefore, Right to Information has been given the status of a fundamental right under Article 19(1) of the Constitution.

In the following sections of the article, it is discussed how RTI act has empowered the common people, promoted good governance and strengthened participatory democracy.

Accessibility

In pre-RTI era people’s role was only restricted to the election of their leaders people did not have any right to know about the issues of government activities. But RTI act gave the common people the much-needed right to seek information about the works of their government. The act was
given the status of fundamental right and it is evident from the fact that how crucial it is for the proper functioning of the government.

**Empowerment**

According to French philosopher Michel Foucault, power is derived from knowledge and information is the basic component of knowledge. So, in this age of technology driven information revolution, empowerment means access to information. The first thing any tyrannical government does is to restrict the people’s access to the resources of information and monopolize over it while the principle of good governance demands free flow of information. Concentration of information inevitably leads to centralization of power.

RTI act democratized the information and decentralized the power. Power no more remains confined to select few, rather it was made available equally to all the citizens. So, undoubtedly RTI serves as a great tool of empowerment for the common people.

**Participation**

RTI act facilitated and encouraged the participation of common people in the process of governance. Earlier people had the will, but did not have the way to take part in so-called ‘official’ affairs. But RTI act paved the way for active participation of the common people in governance. People showed increased interest in the affairs of government and sought information regarding various issues affecting their lives and well-being.

For any vibrant society participation of people in governance is very essential. The main reason behind this is that governance is not a prerogative of a particular group or class, it affects the whole society. So, the government policies and schemes must be formulated keeping in mind the interests of all the sections of the society, especially the downtrodden and marginalized. It would only be possible when all the sections are given right to take part in it.

**Accountability**

RTI act empowered the people to seek definite and direct answer from the officials of their works or lack of it. So, accountability invariably led to efficiency and sense of responsibility among government officials.

**Transparency**

Transparency is the cornerstone of any good government. But in Indian bureaucratic system and government functionaries, transparency was an exception rather than being a norm. According to latest [2012] ranking of Transparency International, India stands at 94, out of 176 nations. The survey also revealed that 54% Indians paid bribe, at least once, to get things done.

RTI act has the potentiality to tackle with this rampant corruption in both at grass root level and at power corridors of high and mighty. After enactment of this act, many a cases of corruption came to light. From the Commonwealth Games to the 2G scam, RTI queries have been the starting point of exposure in a score of recent cases of corruption. It is the most powerful weapon in hands of common people to challenge the impenetrable fortress of officialdom.

**Good governance**

Democracy is all about people’s participation and empowerment. RTI act has played a significant role in strengthening democracy by promoting decentralization of power and good governance. RTI made it possible, to a great extent, for the people to decide and determine the way they want to be governed. RTI act gave the common people a defining power to shape the government schemes and policies. Governance was no more an arbitrary privilege of select few. RTI act lent voice to the aspirations of ordinary citizens in issues of governance.

**Challenges**

The journey of RTI has not been a smooth sailing. It faced challenges and resistance from various quarters. First one came from the very creators of the act. For many it was like Frankenstein’s monster which started haunting and hounding its creator. Bureaucrats and babus put stiff resistance and showed grudging reluctance while parting away with information sought under RTI. The obvious reason for their discomfort was that their activities were made open to public scrutiny. Therefore, government officials often indulge in dilatory tactics by putting forth some lame excuses. In such cases Information Commissioners have significant role to play.
To limit the power given under RTI, government made numerous attempts to amend the act. It was successful in keeping CBI out of its purview. In 2006, government proposed an amendment to deny public access to official file noting. The amendments had sought to restrict disclosure of file noting only to social and developmental issues. But under the pressure from civil right activists and criticism of common people, the government had recently dropped the proposed amendment. The common people must be always alert to oppose any move to dilute their right to information.

RTI activists played the role of whistleblower in many cases of corruption involving powerful people which exposed the crusader of transparency to considerable risks. Recently many RTI activists were attacked and killed for seeking information. Such incidents discouraged people from seeking information. Measures must be taken to maintain confidentiality of identity of information seekers and ensure their security.

Finally, the common people need to exercise considerable restrain while using RTI. Many a times the information sought, breached the privacy of public figures. Such practices will give the government reasons good enough to limit the act in the name of safeguarding privacy. Apart from this, the act is often used or misused to settle personal grudges and vendetta. Doing this will only reduce this act of empowerment into a tool of blackmailing.

**Conclusion**

The best way to deal with all these challenges while promoting good governance is by making the act redundant. The governments, instead of waiting for the common people to seek information, must voluntarily make all the information available to the people. It will not only promote good governance but also increase the trust between government and the people it governs.

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Under the Guidance of Ajay Kumar Singh (B.Tech. IIT Roorkee)

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Banks perform a very critical function of financial intermediation, i.e. accepting deposits from the savers and lending to the borrowers, and, in the process, facilitate efficient allocation of funds. In their role as financial intermediaries, banks undertake transformation-of risk, size and maturity and play a catalytic role in the economic growth. Banks are a critical link in the transmission mechanism of monetary policy and enable efficient transmission of policy actions. Thus, banks play a very important role in the overall economy.

Indian economy, with its varied geography and demography and the growth requirements to support its population, places a huge responsibility on the financial system in general and banks in particular.

Banking in India has a long history and its evolution makes an interesting case study. It has evolved over a period into a resilient system and has received international acclaim for surviving the Global crisis without any major impact.

The present banking structure in India consists of commercial banks, urban co-operative banks, regional rural banks (RRBs) and rural co-operative banks, which, in turn, comprise short-term co-operative credit structure (State co-operative banks and district central co-operative banks) and long-term credit structure (state co-operative agriculture and rural development banks and primary co-operative agriculture and rural development banks). Commercial banks form the bedrock of the Indian financial system accounting for a significant portion of the total assets.

This paper tracks the evolution of Indian commercial banking with a corresponding recounting of evolution of its regulation.

Evolution of Banking in India

Evolution of banking in India can be categorised into three major phases, the early phase (1947-67), the phase of social controls (1967-91) and the reform phase (1991 onwards).

Banking in the Early Years of Independent India: 1947-1967

At the time of independence, Indian banking sector was under developed, lacking in depth. Banks were owned by the private sector and as such there was large concentration of resources - mobilized through deposits - in the
hands of a few business families. As a result, the credit requirements of agriculture and other needy sectors were ignored. The early phase of banking development was characterized by three fundamental milestone developments: enactment of Banking Companies Act, 1949 (later renamed as the Banking Regulation Act), the Deposit Insurance Corporation Act, 1961 and the nationalization of the Imperial Bank of India (1955). The focus of these developments was to put in place an enabling legal framework capable of ushering in bank regulation, depositor protection and extension of banking facilities on a large-scale, more particularly in the rural and semi-urban areas, through the New Branch Licensing Policy (1962). Reflecting these developments, population per branch fell significantly from 1,36,000 in 1951 to 65,000 in 1967.


Despite the expansion of banking network, the share of agriculture in credit dispensed by scheduled commercial bank remained stagnant. In order to enhance the spread of bank credit, the concept of social control over banking was introduced. The main objectives of social control was to achieve a wider spread of bank credit, prevent its misuse, direct a larger volume of credit flow to priority sectors and to make it an effective instrument of economic development. Nationalization of banks was resorted to in 1969 (14 banks) and, subsequently in 1980s (6 banks). Introduction of specific schemes like the Lead Bank Scheme (LBS) and Service Area Approach (SAA) were other policy initiatives characterizing this phase. This phase also witnessed institutional development in the form of setting up of Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) aimed at meeting the credit needs of small and marginal farmers. This phase was, however, marked by significant expansion of the Government’s budget and increased statutory preemptions (as high as 63.5 percent) of banks’ resources to finance high fiscal deficits. The proliferation of directed credit arrangements, administered interest rates and increase in statutory preemptions, all had an adverse impact on banks’ profitability and capital base.

Phase of Financial Sector Reforms: 1991 onwards

Comprehensive reform measures were undertaken in 1991 in the wake of the Balance of Payments crisis, encompassing trade, external and banking sectors. The objective of the banking sector reforms was to promote a diversified, efficient and competitive financial system with the ultimate objective of improving the allocative efficiency of resources through operational flexibility, improved financial viability and institutional strengthening. The reforms have focussed on removing financial repression through reductions in statutory preemptions, while stepping up and aligning prudential regulations to the international standards (Basel I) and benchmarks in a phased manner. Furthermore, interest rates on both deposits and advances of banks have been progressively deregulated. The banking sector reforms essentially took a two pronged approach. First, the level of competition was gradually increased within the banking system while simultaneously introducing international best practices in prudential regulation and supervision tailored to Indian requirements. Second, active steps were taken to improve the institutional arrangements including the legal framework and technological system.

Measures to improve the health of the banking system have included (i) restoration of public sector banks’ net worth through recapitalization; (ii) streamlining of the supervision process with a combination of on-site and off-site surveillance along with external auditing; (iii) introduction of structured and discretionary intervention for problem banks through a prompt corrective action (PCA) mechanism; (iv) institutionalization of a mechanism facilitating greater coordination for regulation and supervision of financial conglomerates; (v) strengthening of creditor rights (still in process); and (vi) increased emphasis on corporate governance.

On the back of concerted policy efforts, the banking sector performance has improved over the years, especially during the post-reform period. Gross NPAs as percent of gross advances fell from 15.7 percent as at end-March 1997 to 2.9 percent as at-end March 2012 while return on assets (RoA) improved from 0.81 percent to 1.07 percent during the same period. The Capital adequacy Ratio (CRAR) remained above 10 percent from end March 1997 and above 12 percent from end March 2002. It reached 14.1 percent as at end March 2012. Overseas presence of Indian banks has also gone up considerably during this period and currently there are 165 branches of Indian banks operating overseas. Consistent with the policy approach to benchmark the banking system to
the best international standards with emphasis on gradual harmonisation, all commercial banks (except Local Area Banks and RRBs) migrated to Basel II framework by March 31, 2009.

**Evolution of Bank regulation in India**

A robust regulatory framework is a prerequisite for the development of banking system. Prior to 1949, the banking companies, along with other companies, were governed by the Indian Companies Act, 1913. This Act, however, contained very few provisions specifically applicable to banks. There were also a few *ad hoc* enactments, such as the Banking Companies (Inspection) Ordinance, 1946, and the Banking Companies (Restriction of Branches) Act, 1946, covering specific regulatory aspects. There was no separate legislative framework for regulation of the banking system.

In March 1949, a special legislation, called the Banking Companies Act, 1949, applicable exclusively to the banking companies, was passed. This Act was renamed as the Banking Regulation Act in March 1966. The Act vested in the Reserve Bank, the responsibility relating to licensing of banks, branch expansion, liquidity of their assets, management and methods of working, amalgamation, reconstruction and liquidation. Various amendments in several provisions of the Act were made from time to time addressing the evolving imperatives of the banking sector developments.

The overarching philosophy underlying banking regulation in India has been to ensure that the growth of the financial sector remains in alignment with the growth of real sector and that there is a harmonized development of real and financial sectors. While recognizing the significance of innovation for efficient allocation of resources and increased competition, the regulation adopted a measured approach, striking a balance between costs of misadventures and benefits of growth. In recognition of Indian regulatory approach, RBI was awarded the 2012 Dufrenoy Prize for facilitating responsible innovation in finance.

**Indian Banking Regulation during the Global Crisis**

The recent global financial crisis which wreaked great havoc in the international financial landscape, fortunately, did not have any significant impact on the Indian banking system. This was mainly due to the fact that the Indian banking system had negligible exposure to toxic assets, did not have exotic structured products and, more importantly, had in place a macroprudential framework which addressed the procyclicality and interconnected dimensions of the systemic risk. The developments in the Indian financial regulation in the post-crisis period, therefore, have, primarily, been guided by the immediate imperative of containing the financial contagion from abroad and carrying forward the process of financial sector reforms in a calibrated manner distilling the lessons from the crisis and aligning the regulatory and supervisory framework to the evolving international standards (Basel III) in the wake of the crisis.

To cushion the adverse impact on India, of the global economic downturn, many measures were undertaken. The sector-specific, counter-cyclical regulatory measures (reduction in risk-weights and provisioning) were undertaken in conjunction with the easing of the monetary policy measures. Considering the tightness in the market liquidity as the immediate impact of global crisis, adequate liquidity, both rupee and forex, was ensured. Rupee liquidity was augmented through measures including progressive reduction in Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) and policy rates and by providing a special repo window under Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) for banks for on lending to Non-bank Financial Companies (NBFCs), Housing Finance Companies (HFCs) & Mutual Funds. Measures for augmenting forex liquidity in the banking system comprised upward revision of interest rate ceilings on Non Resident deposits; relaxation of External Commercial Borrowings (ECB) regime; allowing NBFCs/HFCs access to external borrowings and introduction of rupee-dollar swap facility for banks with overseas branches to provide comfort in managing short term funding needs.

The regulatory measures initiated for furthering financial sector reforms could broadly be classified into those aimed at strengthening resilience of the financial system and those aimed at institutional and market development. Measures under the former included implementation of advanced approaches of Basel II and Basel III, while the latter comprised development of market for securitization and CDS, setting up of Financial Stability Development Council (FSDC), proposal for the introduction of holding company structure for banks, proposal for granting...
additional licenses for entry of new banks in private sector and deregulation of interest rates on savings deposits.

**Challenges faced by the banking system**

Banking system world over is undergoing significant changes ranging from higher capital and liquidity requirements to changes in the business model itself. The lacunae identified to have precipitated the crisis are sought to be addressed through a complete revamp of the regulation, focused both on microprudential; and systemic risk (macroprudential) aspects, which entails higher capital and liquidity requirements, hiving off of certain risky activities, strengthening risk management framework etc. Added to these, the growing requirements of the economy in terms of reaching to the unbanked segments, funding the gigantic infrastructure requirements and coping with the rapid technological changes are some of the other challenges faced by banks.

The challenges faced by banks in India can be broadly divided into three categories- (i) challenges in coping up with the emerging regulatory and supervisory framework, (ii) challenges in meeting the specific needs of the economy and (iii) challenges in fixing the fault lines in the system.

There has been a paradigm shift in the regulatory framework for banks, especially drawing from the lessons offered by the crises. Basel guidelines, first issued in 1988, linked capital to the risk inherent in the assets held by banks and stipulated minimum capital to be maintained as a ratio of the risk weighted assets. Over the years the guidelines were fine-tuned keeping in consideration the developments in the risk management systems of the banks and also the technological advances. The global financial crisis highlighted some of the gaps present in the extant regulatory framework which led to its overhaul. The capital requirements under Basel III have been raised- the equity capital requirement has been increased to 7 percent (inclusive of 2.5 percent of capital conservation buffer) of risk weighted assets as against the requirement of just 2 percent under Basel II. Additionally, other requirements in terms of maintenance of adequate liquidity and containment of leverage have been stipulated. The new regulations may have implications on banks’ operations and profitability and banks are required to meet these challenges by streamlining their operations and increasing operational efficiency.

Indian economy, with its varied geography and demography and the growth requirements to support its population, places a huge responsibility on the financial system in general and banks in particular. Despite the widespread expansion of banking sector, a large section of the population still remains excluded from the formal financial system. Banks are required to play a major role in reaching out to the excluded segments of the population. Financial Inclusion has assumed critical importance and various initiatives have been undertaken in this regard. Of the 74,414 villages with population exceeding 2000 identified as unbanked, 74,199 villages (99.7 percent) have been provided with banking facilities by March 2012. In the next stage villages with population of less than 2000 are proposed to be covered. Given the importance of inclusive growth, both in terms of economic growth and social stability, banks need to leverage the technology to overcome the issue of higher costs and difficulties in reaching out to far flung areas.

**Technology is both an opportunity as well as a threat for the banks.** Technology has enabled anytime, anywhere banking and has facilitated banks to transcend the limitations imposed by time, distance and human ability. However, enhanced usage of technology also poses severe challenges for banks both, in terms of keeping pace with the fast growing /changing technological demands so as to maintain an edge on the profitability, delivery and quality fronts as also with regard to the recognition, understanding, management and mitigation of risks inherent in the use of technology.

**Concluding Observations**

The transformation of the banking sector in India needs to be viewed in light of the overall economic reform process along with the rapid changes that have been taking place in the global environment within which banks operate. Indian Banking, going forward, is poised for interesting times as it aligns itself with global best practices in terms of sophisticated risk management systems and practices while, at the same time, continues the policy objective of reaching the excluded in the hinterlands of the country and promoting inclusive growth.

(E-mail:anandsinha@rbi.org.in)
TSP GS / CSAT (Under Guidance of Neetu Singh and Other Faculty)

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2011 UPSC Final Rank 23, 29, 30, 44, 53, 97 and others

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TEST SERIES PROGRAMME, 13

Test - 1 History (Ancient/Medival) - 30th, December
Test - 2 Environment/Ecology - 6th, January
Test - 3 Modern India/Art/Cultural - 13th, January
Test - 4 Indian Polity - 20th, January
Test - 5 Physical India/World - 27th, January
Test - 6 Climate Change - 3rd, February
Test - 7 NCERT (History viii) Basic Economic - 10th, Feb.
Test - 8 Socio Economic Geography - 17th, February
Test - 9 India Year Book/ Manorama - 24th, February
Test - 10 CSAT (Basic Numeracy) - 3rd, March

Test - 11 Budget/ Economic/ Current Economic - 10th, March
Test - 12 General Science (Physics/ Chemistry) - 17th, March
Test - 13 Biology & Medical Discovery - 24th, March
Test - 14 Current Affairs (Science Tech./ Satellite) - 31st, March
Test - 15 CSAT (Logical Reasoning/ Analytical Ability) - 7th, April
Test - 16 CSAT (D. M) /Current Affairs ( Awards/ Sports) - 14th, April
Test - 17 History/ Indian Geography/ Economic/ INDIA - 21st, April
Test - 18 Comprehensive - I (GS) - 28th, April
Test - 19 Comprehensive - II (CSAT) - 30th, April

Tests Details

Test Timing : 10 am - 12.noon & 5 pm - 7 pm
* Test GS + CSAT are19 * These are framed on UPSC New Pattern * Test enrolment can be taken without class enrolment
* Details of answer will be provided after the test along with Key* Each topic: Notes : Current Affairs, Environment Report,
* Result of the test will be displayed after test ( Test conduct OMR Sheet) * Online test provision also., Test Discussion for the
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Yojana January 2013
Strengthening and Restructuring of ICDS scheme

Manisha Jain

The objectives of the ICDS mission would be to institutionalise essential services and strengthen structures at all levels. It will also enhance capacities at all levels.

The integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), scheme run by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, is all set for a major strengthening and restructuring with an accent on convergence of the scheme with nodal ministries and Panchayati raj Institutions. There were various reasons why the need for strengthening and restructuring was felt. The rapid universalisation did not match the human and financial resource. There were also several programmatic gaps: absence of building and facilities at the Aanganwadi level, shortage of quality human resource. There was also an inadequate focus on children under the age of three and early childhood education. The AWCs were perceived as merely feeding centres. There was inadequate convergence and low involvement of states in programme planning.

There were also several operational gaps like insufficient accountability, irregularity in the functioning of AWCs and fund transfer mechanism marked with delays, weak concurrent monitoring and a single Aanganwadi worker at each AWC burdened with non-ICDS functions.

The ICDS is going to be set in a mission mode with institutional mechanisms at the central, state, district and block level as well as adequate human and financial resources being linked to accountability and outcomes. It will be in mission mode as is the case with other flagship programmes like National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan.

A senior official in the ministry said that they were putting up the entire thing in the public domain. There would be programmatic change, managerial intervention and institutional changes. The reforms have been planned on these lines and they would give a certain flexibility to the state so that they submit their annual plan based on their local needs. The state could suggest any innovation or funding or any pilot to be done.

One of the major weakness of ICDS was that there wasn’t any support for the functioning of Aanganwadi Centres (AWCs). This is going to be addressed through the restructuring. A strong convergence with other programmes like NREGA and NRHM and is being envisaged. For instance water and sanitation problems will be solved.
by convergence with the water and sanitation department.

The official added that over the next five years, they had a target to fill up the maximum gaps. They were experimenting for setting up AWC cum day-care centres. About 70,000 AWCs are going to be converted into creche day care centres. The focus is hence going to be redefined, the official added. Additional workers will be sent into nearly 200 districts, which would be high-burden districts. For instance, if a district had burdened with under nutrition, it would get more workers. On a cluster of three to four AWCs would be a link worker. There would be a decentralized approach, states would be left free to devise their own strategies.

The focus will be on making ICDS a vibrant institution. The accent would be on pre-school non formal education, the age group of 3-6 years. The ministry is taking steps for policy finalization, quality and standards. This, coupled with training and capacity building of workers, would improve the situation. There would be an interface with parents and elders for focus on early childhood education.

The ICDS has come under fire for siphoning off of funds and not letting them reach the concerned beneficiaries. The official asserted that they had a social audit in place to check this. The effort was being made to take measures to stop this corrupt practice.

There would be vigorous monitoring and more community mobilization.

The infrastructure would be developed to make the services more child-friendly. More space would be provided and play facilities would be enhanced for the children. Even the curriculum would be revised to make it more child friendly.

There is a plan to roll out Strengthened and Restructured ICDS in three years beginning with 200 High Burden districts in the first year 2012-13; additional 200 districts in second year (2013-14) including districts from special category States namely Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand and North East Region and remaining 243 districts in the third year (2014-15) of the 12th Five Year Plan.

The financial implications during 12th Five Year Plan is estimated at Rs. 1,23,580 crore.

Programmatic, management and institutional reforms will be initiated with widened and revised package of services to focus on under-3 children, maternal care, and Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) as per the broad framework for implementation with necessary changes in financial norms/allocations and outcomes along with flexibility to the States with scope for innovations.

There will be continued implementation of ICDS Scheme in 12th Five Year Plan and ICDS in Mission mode.

For greater focus and reaching children under three and pregnant and lactating mothers, a package of six services has been redesigned with new components.

There will be new childcare and nutrition counselling services. There will be increased investment in infrastructure and childcare facilities. To enhance nutritional impact additional nutrition counselor will be added to the AWCs. States will be given flexibility to provide community based care to moderately and severely undernourished children. The mission mode will allow improved growth monitoring and community participation through use of joint Mother and Child Protection Cards. It ensures a better health care by ensuring a continuum of care from family to AWC to community to health sub-centres and so on. It will strive to improve the quality of early learning through a comprehensive training and curriculum framework.

The objectives of the ICDS mission would be to institutionalise essential services and strengthen structures at all levels. It will also enhance capacities at all levels. Other objectives include ensuring proper inter-sectoral response, raising public awareness and participation, and creating a data base and knowledge base of child development services.

The strengthening and restructuring of ICDS Scheme will prevent and reduce young child under-nutrition by 10 percentage points in 0-3 years. Enhance early development and learning outcomes in all children below six years of age. Improve care and nutrition of girls and women and reduce anaemia prevalence in young children, girls and women by one-fifth.

ICDS is a universal programme for children under 6 years and pregnant and lactating mothers. Currently it is benefitting 9.65 crore beneficiaries of which 7.82 crore are children under 6 and 1.83 crore are pregnant and lactating mothers. With improved services, the number of beneficiaries is likely to increase.

ICDS introduced in 1975, has been universalised mainly after 2005-06 and finally in 2008-09 through 7076 approved Projects and 14 lakh AWCs across the country. The universalisation, however, did not match with the concomitant human and financial resources as a result of which programmatic, management and institutional gaps have crept in. This necessitated the strengthening and restructuring of ICDS.

(E-mail: majain51@yahoo.com)
Higher education has long been recognized for improving the quality of human life. Women constitute an important human capital for enhancing economic strength of a nation. To quote Mahatma Gandhi, “Educate one man, you educate one person, but educate a woman and you educate a whole civilization.”

Education being in the Concurrent List is the responsibility of both the central and the state governments. The principle of gender equity is clearly enshrined in the Indian Constitution and even welfare economics advocates gender equality in all core sectors of human development, especially education. As women constitute 48.46 percent of the total population of India, abridging gender disparities in higher education shall be of great aid of in their empowerment.

Status of Women in Higher Education

In the ancient India, all eligible disciples acquired knowledge without discrimination of gender or social status. The teaching of Vedas was the primary subject and Gargi and Maitreyi have been prominent women intellectuals of this period. The medieaval period, however, is characterized as the “dark age” for women in India as they were discriminated against and women education being confined to those of royal and rich blood having access to liberal education at homes. The documentation of Mughal period in “Humayun Nama” by Gulbadan Begum, the sister of Humayun, is a testimony of the fact that even in Mughal era, learned women made their presence conspicuous in the society. Education during the colonial period was more widespread among men than women. Several landmark policies during the colonial rule including the McCauley’s Policy of 1835 and Wood’s Education Dispatch of 1854 besides opening up of first training college for women primary teachers in 1874 were instrumental in spread of female education at all levels. The year 1919 was marked by the provision of freeships and
scholarships to female students in education along with liberal grants-in-aid to girls’ schools by the Government of India. In 1946-47, there were 21479 primary schools, 2370 secondary schools, 59 colleges of arts and science and 4288 institutions for professional, technical, and special education for girls and women.

In modern times, various commissions and committees set up in India advocated the need for gender parity at all stages of education. The University Education Commission (1948–49) under the chairmanship of Dr. S. Radha Krishnan advocated equity in higher education with special provisions for women. Hartog Committee (1929) and the Committee on the Education of Women (1959) advocated gender differentiated curricula which claimed Science and Technical studies to be Masculine Disciplines and Arts and Commerce to be Feminine Disciplines. This subsequently fuelled gender disparities in access to education. It was Hansa Mehta Committee (1962) on Differentiation of Curricula for Boys and Girls which perceived differentiation as a perpetuation of existing tradition of an inequitable division of labour, leading to corresponding subject divisions and dubbed it unscientific. In a report entitled Towards Equality, the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women, 1974, it was correlated that Indian states with high population of Scheduled Caste (SC)/ Scheduled Tribe (ST) and Muslims were marked by low literacy rates. Similarly in 2006, the Sachar Committee Report (Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India) revealed the marginalized treatment which the Muslim and SC/ST women have to undergo in all spheres of their social and economic lives. It also articulated that the educational status of Muslim and SC/ST women in particular is quite low being a cause of concern. Policy documents like the report of the Kothari Commission (Government of India, 1964-66) and the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 (Government of India, 1986) and its Programme of Action (POA) in 1992 (Government of India, 1992) put enormous emphasis on promotion of gender equity in education by reducing the gender gap in access, retention and transition from one stage to other. The NPE stressed that “Education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In order to neutralize the accumulated disadvantages of the past, there will be a well conceived edge in favour of women”. This marked a watershed as regards women education. The National Policy for Empowerment of Women (2001) has been a remarkable achievement for Indian women. The year 2001 was celebrated as Women’s Empowerment Year which recognized women as agents of socio-economic change and development in the country.

At the international level, India has ratified various conventions committing to secure equal rights of women. Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and Conference on Education for All Girls (UNICEF, 1992) underline the need of education for girls at all stages for reducing vulnerability and discrimination. Similarly, Beijing Conference: Platform for Action, 1995 advocates increasing literacy level of women besides improving women’s access to vocational training, science and technology. Even the theme for International Women’s Day (8th March) by the United Nations in 2011 was “Equal Access to Education, Training and Science and Technology: Pathway to Decent Work for Women.”

Women education and empowerment has been placed at the forefront of development programmes during the Five Year Plans of India. The First Five Year Plan (1951-56) recognized equality of opportunity for males and females “so that their entry into the professions and public services is in no way prejudiced.” The Third Five Year Plan (1961-65) focused on the education of girls and reduction of disparities between boys and girls at all levels of education. The Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) was committed to achieving a larger measure of equalization of educational opportunities, both in terms of access and achievement. It reiterated education for empowerment of women. The Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) reviewed girls’ education as a major area seeking attention. The plan proposed to create an enabling environment by providing easy and equal access to educational opportunities, free education and gender-sensitive educational system. The plan laid emphasis on Universalisation of Elementary
Education (UEE) guided by five parameters i.e. universal access, universal enrolment, universal retention, universal achievement, and equity. The approach paper for the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2007-2012) emphasized the need for expansion of higher education by underlining that “India has a well-developed and comprehensive higher education system which has served well thus far, but is now inadequate. The extent of access it provides is limited.”

The emphasis on education in various Five Year Plans and policy documents has yielded perceptible results. The accessibility of women in higher education in India, which was barely 10 percent in 1950-51, doubled to 20 percent by 1970-71 (Selected Education Statistics, 2000-01). It increased to 40 percent by the end of September 2009. Considering women from SC and ST in higher education, they comprise 4.53 percent and 1.93 percent respectively of the total enrolment. (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Statistics of Higher and Technical Education 2009-10). It is, however, seen that though accessibility of women in higher education has increased manifold since independence, their participation is below fifty percent at all stages of education.

The results, though encouraging are however not satisfactory when viewed in global context. UNESCO, in its Report on “Women and management in higher education (2002), highlights notable variations across countries as regards accessibility of education for women. Women are seen to comprise 52 percent of tertiary students in the more developed regions, thereby implying fairly equal access to higher education while the share of women in higher education in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) is only 27 percent. The countries with women enrolment in higher education between 33 percent (China) to 49 percent (Latin America) have been bracketed as less developed regions. On such a scale, India falls in the category of less developed country and much effort needs to be done for enriching our human capital base. Soaring population for countries, with India being one of them, has been dubbed as one of the reasons for inequalities of access to higher education (UNESCO, 2002, Women and management in higher education, Follow-Up to the World Conference on Higher Education, (Paris, 5-9 October, 1998).

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) which is the ratio of the number of pupils enrolled in Higher Education (18-23 years) to the total population in the age group shows an increasing trend over the years and by the end of September 2009 stood at 14.99 percent (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Statistics of Higher and Technical Education 2009-10). It is disheartening to find the GER for women at 12.66 percent which indicates that out of every 100 girls, not more than 13 avail higher education in the relevant age group. Uttrakhand has the highest GER followed by Delhi and Chandigarh. On the contrary, Daman and Diu has the lowest GER followed by Dadar and Nagar Haveli and Orissa.

The progress towards gender equity in education can aptly be measured in terms of Gender Parity Index (GPI). It is the ratio of GER for girls to that for boys at a given level of education. A GPI of one denotes absence of gender disparity and availability of equal learning opportunities for both girls and boys. Although India displays GPI equal to 0.74 by the end of September 2009 (Ministry of Human Resource Development, Statistics of Higher and Technical Education 2009-10), there are wide gender gaps in educational participation between men and women in some states like Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand and Orissa. They may therefore be coined educationally backward states. In contrast, there are states/union territories like Goa, Kerala, Punjab, Chandigarh, Meghalaya, Pondicherry and Dadar and Nagar Haveli which have GPI more than unity. This seems to suggest the non-biased treatment in education towards women in these states.

Equity in tertiary education for women can also be viewed with respect to their choices of discipline. It has been found that women seem to favour disciplines like Arts, humanities, medicine and teacher’s education, so they have been viewed as feminine disciplines. The domain of Indian males is perceived to be in fields like commerce, law, engineering, so these are classified as masculine disciplines.

The Way Ahead

In an era of knowledge economy, much needs to be done
to push the greater lot of women towards achieving their dreams of attaining educational parity with not only men but also women of rest of the developed world. The Indian government needs to prioritize women education and enhance opportunities of access to higher education at the end of the senior secondary education especially in rural, remote and tribal areas. The increased contribution by both men and women possessing higher education with relevant skill development can go a long way in ensuring holistic national development towards the millennium development goals. For attaining a sustainable economic growth both formal as well as non-formal education for women is indispensable. Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system of education has emerged as a viable tool with immense potential for creating widespread access to knowledge for women.

The need for higher education for women, and in particular of rural, remote and tribal women, is indispensable. The wheels of progress have to be kept greased and moving by empowering the Human Resources with the state of the art learning facility as we have an edge over other countries as regards young work force. We need to recognize the strength of our youngistan so that it can be transformed into rich employable human capital through higher education and advanced training. Women need to find their place with dignity at equal terms with that of men in the fiercely competitive social and economic world. There is no doubt that there would surely be a day when women no longer remain second-class citizens and would be treated at par with men. In this context it is worthwhile to recall the words of Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru who said that “In order to awaken people, it is the women who has to be awakened. Once she moves, the country moves and thus we build the India of tomorrow.”

(E-mail: mintrash@gmail.com)

CensusInfo India Software Launched

The CensusInfo India Software has been launched by Dr. C.Chandramouli, Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India.

The specially developed CensusInfo India Software is an innovative and flexible database technology used for the dissemination of Population and Housing Census results. The software has been developed by the United Nations Statistics Division, in partnership with UNICEF and UNFPA, to help countries disseminate their census results at any relevant geographical level, on CD-ROM and also on the web. CensusInfo India on Houses, Household Amenities and Assets based on Census 2011 data provides access to the dataset on a number of indicators at State and District level. The user is able to extract information quite easily and generate charts and maps depicting the data. This powerful data dissemination tool would not only reduce the burden of statistical drudgery, but at the same time would make using census data an enjoyable experience.

Rural Business Hub Scheme

The Rural Business Hubs (RBH) Scheme aims at synergistically linking the strengths of rural areas/producers with industry and marketing organizations so that rural products reach wider market and benefits of value addition are shared. The objectives of RBH Scheme are to identify rural products which have potential for national/ international markets and standardize their quality; to ensure value addition in rural products and increase production volumes to levels viable for marketing; to promote Rural Non-Farming Enterprises (RNFE) which utilize local skills and/or resources and promote rural employment and to foster mutually beneficial relations between the producers and Industrial houses.

RBH projects have been sanctioned for various products including metal work, carpets, embroidery, biofuels, horticultural products etc.
BHISHEK BHAGAT (19) is a young student from Bihar who has developed a machine, which can cook food automatically and like one’s mother would do. Sounds interesting, read on!

Hailing from Bhagalpur district of Bihar, Abhishek Bhagat was born in a middle class family. His father is a businessman and runs a general merchant shop. His elder brother is presently pursuing C.A after his graduation in commerce while Abhishek has enrolled himself for a course in animation. Physics has been his all time favorite subject and painting his favorite pastime. While in class 9th, he received the First prize in the state in a painting competition of jointly organized by Indian Oil, Bharat Petroleum, Hindustan Petroleum and Indo-Burma Petroleum Company limited. His first innovation, when he was just twelve years old, was a timer operated explosive device, which scared his parents so much that they packed him off to a boarding school. But this did not deter him even slightly.

The machine will automatically give an alarm once the recipe gets made. The machine can also be used as a mild mixer

The taste of mother’s recipe

Every day he used to see his mother cooking food for the family and spending many hours in the kitchen. Once it so happened that due to his mother’s illness, he had to cook food in her place. He then realized how tedious the job was for ladies to do so every single day through out the year. This motivated him to develop a machine for his mother, which could cook food automatically and save her the pains.

He conceived a rough idea about a machine, which would have boxes to hold different ingredients of a particular recipe and the first version of this machine made successfully in 2009 could make tea and kheer (kind of rice pudding). This innovation won him the first prize in the Ignite 2009 (national competition of students’ ideas and innovations) competition. He received the prize at the hands of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam at IIM Ahmedabad, who much appreciated his machine. NIF also filed a patent (729/ KOL/2010) in his name.
Later NIF supported him to develop an improved prototype with eight boxes for different ingredients and some other technological refinements. A Delhi based designer has also been engaged to further develop the prototype and make it into a marketable product. Abhishek also participated in the Innovations’ Exhibition at the President House in March 2011 and was the INK Fellow in 2011. He also won a National Award in NIF’s Sixth National Biennial Competition at the hands of the then President of India, Smt. Pratibha Devi Sinh Patil, in March 2012.

The automatic food making machine

This machine is electricity operated automatic food making machine where only ingredients are loaded in boxes and the cooking is completed according to the recipe card being used.

The machine has eight boxes and a central container. The boxes house the different ingredients, which fall into the central cooking container as per the predefined timing in the recipe card. This recipe card is pre programmed. Once the recipe card gets inserted, the display on the machine shows the information about the different ingredients that need to be put in the respective boxes. Once this is done, the user may sit back and relax. The machine will automatically give an alarm once the recipe gets made. The machine can also be used as a mild mixer.

During the course of the development of this machine, his mother provided strong support to him, helping him cope up with bouts of depression and setbacks. She along with his cousin sister helped him develop the recipe modules based on which the recipe cards were designed. This machine, undergoing value addition right now, would be very helpful for the old, bachelors and people with various disabilities as it will do away with the requirement of supervising the whole cooking process. Moreover, the person would be able to taste homemade food anywhere away from the home.

The innovation streak

Abhishek was invited by NIF to be the innovator-in-residence for a period of two months to work on his innovation of the automatic food making machine. Not only did he work on his previous innovations, he also developed a new one, which is the scissor with a measuring tape. It simply means that while you cut a cloth with your scissor, you can see how much inches/feet of the cloth you have cut. So now no need to mark on the cloth, just keep on cutting till you get the right reading on the scissor!

Observing that the sunflower turns its head towards the direction of the sun, Abhishek has also thought a solar light and solar cooker based on the same idea. The solar panels on these would automatically detect the motion of the sun and move accordingly. Thus, they will always be facing the sun and obtaining maximum energy. Another of his concept is the smart watch, which can be programmed for twelve hours to do general household works like switching on bulbs and other appliances. He has many more other ideas to his credit.

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(E-mail : campaign@nifindia.org, www.nifindia.org)
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