

## ROLE OF STATE IN GOVERNANCE- POLICIES AND PRACTICES

**Harpreet Kaur**

Principal, Guru Nanak Khalsa College, Daroli Kalan, Jalandhar

---

### ABSTRACT

The concept of state occupies a central place in discourses on politics and administration. State is basically the political organ of the society. Government is a critical element of the state. The government is constitutionally responsible to the state for administration through various institutions to ensure a better society and improved lives of citizens. Transparency and accountability are essential ingredients of good governance. The interaction between citizens and the government requires a certain level of transparency in its functioning. Accountability ensures an answerability for the actions taken by the government machinery towards the people it serves. Ethical governance can be called as an augmentation to good governance. It requires that public officials adhere to the principle of promoting public interest over personal gains. They should exhibit high standards of moral conduct and consider their jobs as vocation. Vocation here means a purpose driven life committed to the cause of promoting the common good.

**Key Words:** Accountability, Development, Ethical, Governance, Information, State,

### INTRODUCTION

#### GOVERNANCE: MEANING AND FEATURES

The term, governance, is derived from the Greek term, Kubernao, which means, 'to steer'. So etymologically, governance is the process that steers the affairs of the state. This phrase, governance, came into the limelight with the publication of the World Bank's report on sub-Saharan Africa in 1989. The report said that the development initiatives in sub Saharan Africa were not producing desired results due to a 'crisis of governance' The World Bank defines governance as, 'The exercise of political authority, and the use of institutional resources to manage society's problems and affairs. From this perspective governance is interpreted as the institutional capacity of public organizations to provide public and other goods demanded by a country's citizens in an effective, transparent, impartial and accountable manner, subject to resource constraints. Governance is needed to ensure an effective functioning of the state and non-state machinery engaged in the promotion of public good. It outlines the processes, checks and balances within which the promotion of public good is to be carried out. In the course of administration, governance allows the creation of relationships between various institutions and citizens. The nature of these relationships depends on the nature of state e.g. whether it is a military state, autocratic state, democratic state or any other form. The meaning of governance includes building and strengthening the capacities of various institutions of the state or public institutions; encouraging and facilitating the participation of common citizens in the governing process. Governance also refers to the traditions and institutions through which the political authority in a country is exercised.

#### Various features of governance are:-

1. It refers to a complex set of institutions and actors that are drawn not only from the government but from beyond e.g. civil society, Non-Governmental Organizations etc.
2. Governance identifies the power dependence involved in the relationship between institutions engaged in collective action.

3. It recognises the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities for tackling social and economic issues.
4. It is about autonomous self-governing network of actors.
5. Governance ensures that the government is able to use new tools and techniques to steer and guide.

## **GOOD GOVERNANCE**

Since the 1991 economic reforms in India, the concept of governance has undergone considerable changes. The increased role of market and civil society in the governance framework has brought in the concept of good governance to the fore. It has also included elements like transparency, accountability, and effectiveness into its broad contours.

### **The World Bank cites 4 essential components of good governance:**

1. Public sector management needs civil service reforms and an involvement of the private sector. e.g the civil service reforms as suggested by the Administrative Reforms Commission is an example in this regard. Public Private Partnership model of infrastructure development also falls under this.
2. A legal framework for development to ensure the working of market
3. The establishment of accountability through various institutions e.g. Lokpal and Parliamentary Committees etc.
4. Ensuring transparency and access to information. e.g. a free press and the Right to Information Act does this in India. The live presentation of budget, public hearing by the Gram Sabha etc. is also steps in this regard.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) highlights that good governance needs to ensure that all, including the poor and other disadvantaged groups, are included and have the means to:- 1. Influence the direction of development 2. Make contributions to development which is duly recognised 3. Share the benefits of development to improve their lives and livelihoods

### **Features of Good Governance**

1. Accountability: It covers prior political and administrative responsiveness to the need of the people.
2. Transparency: It involves free access to information with all openness that involves hardly any concealment of facts and information.
3. Participation: People's participation is given adequate space in the scheme of governance.
4. Rule of law: It involves effective implementation of legal provisions for public goods.
5. Efficiency: It covers effectiveness in dealing with public service and utilization of public funds at large.
6. Equity: All should be equal, with promotion of gender equity, and, with adequate emphasis on the poor and the disadvantaged.

## **MEASURES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE**

The involvement of various players in the governance architecture has also led to questions as to how the whole process of governance can be quantifiably measured. This is necessary to

address any deficits of governance and also categories good governance from insufficient ones.

The World Bank has identified 6 dimensions to measure governance:- 1. Voice and accountability which measure political, civil and human rights 2. Instability and violence which measure the likelihood of violent threats to or changes in government which also includes terrorism 3. Effectiveness of government - This measure the competence of the bureaucracy, and the quality of public service delivery 4. Regulatory burden - This measures the policies which are market unfriendly 5. Rule of law - This measures the quality of contract enforcement, the police, the court, as well as the likelihood of crime and violence 6. Control of corruption - This helps in measuring the exercise of public power for private gain, including both petty and large-scale corruption Countries are categorized and ranked on the parameters of good governance based on these dimensions. There have been many attempts by various countries and international organizations to attain good governance in its totality. Although the results vary, the attempts to achieve good governance have resulted in tremendous improvements in the process of governance.

### **GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT: INTER RELATIONSHIP**

The term development is closely related to the process of governance. Every state in the world initiates a series of development activities in order to bring about a positive change in the economy, society and the lives of its citizens. In the entire process of development, the state has played a dominant role. With the involvement of market and civil society in the governance framework, the search for alternative mechanisms to ensure that development benefits reach the people has been a priority agenda for the policymakers. The recent arrangement of Public Private Partnership model has emerged as a viable option to engage the private sector in the development process. The central point in development and governance is that both concepts aim at offering benefits to the citizens. However, neither concepts have any meaning if they do not deliver benefits to citizens. Development initiatives bear fruit in the presence of good governance. Again, good governance ensures participation of people in decision making related to development programmes. The interrelationship between development and governance can be presented in the following manner.

### **TRANSPARENCY**

Transparency implies an openness of decision-making process and freedom of information to the members of the public and the media. Transparency is also a moral issue. Lack of transparency is considered responsible for making the government slow, inefficient and corrupt. Transparent mechanisms involve the creation of a climate of self-restraint and self-check to avoid irregularity. Transparency can also be seen from the following dimensions:- 1. It brings a more careful utilization of public funds 2. It compels the administration to take objective decisions forsaking any particularistic bias 3. It also increases the accountability of public time and money 4. It exposes counter-productive rules and procedures that hampers the administration 5. It enhances public participation in the governance process. The Constitution of India recognises and guarantees the freedom of information as a fundamental right under the Right to Freedom of Expression (Article 19). Right to Information Act has further strengthened the transparency framework in India vis a vis information from public authorities. Right to Information and Transparency The Indian Parliament enacted the Right to Information Act in 2005. It signals a transition from a secretive governance to a transparent one. ● RTI has been seen as the key to strengthening participatory democracy and ushering a people-centric governance. ● Access to information empowers the public as a tool to question the government and also compel it for welfare measures. ● It is also seen as a powerful

means to curb the menace of corruption. The declaration of answer keys by major examinations is also a result of the RTI applications by aspirants. Declaration of wealth by the public authorities including the judges also serves the purpose of a transparent information regime. However, there have been certain criticisms of the RTI as well:- 1. Poor record keeping practices within the bureaucracy results in missing files. 2. Lack of infrastructure and personnel for running the information commissions. 3. Dilution of supplementary laws for whistleblower protection 4. Need to put all the RTI applications on the websites of respective information commissions so as to avoid repeated filings for the same information 5. Bringing political parties under the ambit of RTI - they have been blatantly defying a Central Information Commissioner's order that classifies them as public authorities and thus amenable to disclose information under RTI.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Accountability, in simple terms is answerability for one's actions or behaviour. Public services accountability involves the methodology through which a public agency or a public official fulfils assigned duties and obligations. It includes the process by which the agency or the official is required to account for such actions. Bureaucratic accountability is at the core of public administration in a democracy. Under a constitutional system of government, it is axiomatic that the bureaucrats should be subordinate to the mandates and constraints of the Constitution as interpreted by the judiciary, and to their hierarchical superiors within the organisation. Democratic government also postulates the subordination of the bureaucrats to the people and their elected representatives. The notion of accountability carries two basic connotations: 1. Answerability- which stands for the obligation of public officials to inform about and explain what they are doing 2. Enforcement- the capacity of accounting agencies to impose sanctions on power holders who have violated their public duties Accountability can be viewed from the perspective of domesticating power. There are three different ways of preventing and redressing the abuse of political power. They are: 1. Subjecting power to the threat of sanctions 2. Obligating power to be exercised in transparent ways 3. Forcing power to justify its actions

## **PURPOSES OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

Accountability as a requirement in public functioning entails to achieve the following objectives:- 1. To control the abuse of bureaucratic power and discretion 2. To give an assurance that performances must be in accordance with standards and quality 3. To have a system promoting learning in pursuit of continuous improvements in governance and public management On top of all the above is the notion of human accountability. This involves the values and ethics that perpetuate the trust of the citizens in government machinery and the governance process. Accountability places at least four requirements on the public administration. These include:- 1. Make laws work as intended with a minimum of waste and delay. 2. Exercise lawful and sensible administrative discretion. 3. Recommend new policies and propose changes in existing policies and programmes as needed. 4. Enhance citizen confidence in the administrative institutions of government.

## **TYPES OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

As seen in the context of public policy and administration, accountability has the following five types or elements:- 1. Organizational/administrative accountability – It covers traditional hierarchical accountability within the organization that involves answerability to the superiors for tasks allocated and performed. 2. Legal accountability – It is related to actions in the public domain to the established legislative and judicial process. This is achieved either via a court action or judicial review of the administrative action. The public organizations or its

officials are held accountable for not following legislative norms or legal delegations. 3. Professional accountability – It involves balancing the codes of professions (doctors/engineers etc) with a greater purpose of protecting the public interest. This is necessary as the government depends upon the expert advice in specific fields and projects. 4. Political accountability -It is concerned with the legitimacy of any public program and even the survival of the involved organization. In other words, in a democracy, the administrators are "duty bound to recognise the power of political authority to regulate, set priorities, and redistribute resources and to ensure compliance with orders. 5. Moral accountability -It is more than obedience to laws and bureaucratic norms. A moral public official is the one who "strives for a moral government". As instances of administrative and political corruption has become more and more widespread, the demand for moral accountability in the management of public affairs gets articulated more and more in different forums such as the media, the legislature, and the judiciary. Since the concept of accountability is essentially multidimensional, several tools are employed simultaneously in different countries to ensure administrative accountability in practice.

### **ISSUES AND CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH GOVERNANCE IN INDIA**

The process of governance encounters various challenges. The barriers are multifold and intense in nature. Most importantly, all the challenges are inter-related to each other. The issues involved to good governance are discussed briefly:-

1. Lack of awareness: This is one of the biggest barriers that come in the way of good governance. Due to inadequate literacy, lack of information from the government side, and the failure of civil society institutions there is a lack of awareness among people about the process of governance, and development initiatives. The sense of apathy among people also compounds the problem.
2. Absence of transparency and accountability: Governance gets derailed due to lack of transparency. Moreover, lack of accountability leads to authoritarianism and creates a huge gap between the government and the governed.
3. Corruption and failure to check corruption: Corruption is generally identified as private gains from using public means through unethical practices. This phenomenon takes away development benefits from people.
4. Weak civil society: Civil society bridges the gap between government and governed, and checks the growth of unethical practices. But, when there is an absence of civil society institutions, or when they are weakened, the gap between people and the government gets widened. Good governance is badly affected by weak civil society institutions.
5. Lack of strong institutions of governance: Governance functions with the support of various institutions such as the legislature, executive, and the judiciary, with a clear separation of power. If these institutions succumb to illegal and unethical pressures, and they fail to perform their designated functions, then the institutions get weakened. This results in the failure of the process of governance, and hampers development initiatives.
6. Women empowerment: As women comprise almost 50% of the population it is unfair that they are not adequately represented in government institutions, and other allied sectors. So, in order to ensure good governance, it is essential to ensure empowerment of women.



7. Growing incidence of violence - especially mob violence. Resort to illegal force is considered to be a law and order problem. But when one looks at it from the point of view of the principles of Good governance, it becomes clear that peace and order is the first step to development. Strikes, riots, terror attacks are not tolerant of this harmful culture of violence.
8. Delay in justice delivery - the issues around the pendency of cases especially in the criminal justice department. Under trials constitute more than 63% of the prisoners in the country. The fundamental right to speedy justice needs to be given due consideration for good governance.
9. Centralisation of administrative system - Governments at lower levels can only function efficiently if they are empowered to do so. This is particularly relevant for Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), which currently suffer from inadequate devolution of funds as well as functionaries to carry out the functions constitutionally assigned to them.
10. 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. The Vohra Committee report clearly highlights the nexus between bureaucrats, mafia and politicians.

## CONCLUSION

Government is the primary entity engaged in the governance process. Various other stakeholders also depend on directions and facilitating mechanisms from the government for an effective participation in the governance process. There are Common Service Centres (CSC) across the country that generate awareness about various government schemes. Under the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan also there is a component of awareness generation among the citizens about various government measures. Citizens Charters are also an initiative to let the people be aware of the goals of the department and its function. Online applications and fees collection for almost every government department is a step in this direction. The RTI is in itself a big tool to enforce transparency and accountability from the public servants. The Prevention of Corruption Act is a check on the corruption in public life. Also, various government agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate, Vigilance Commission etc also act as watchdogs on public corruption. The registration of NGOs and checks on their financial contributions by the Home Ministry is a step to strengthen their participation in the governance process in a transparent manner. The NITI aayog has been made a repository of good governance practices. The institutions have incorporated ICT tools to cater to citizens and be available for service 24\*7. The campaign around Beti Bachao Beti Padhao aims to foster female survival and their education including health. This is necessary to ensure their participation in the governance process.

## REFERENCES

1. Jalan Bimal, The Indian Economy Problems and Prospects, 2004, Penguin Group, New Delhi.
2. CMIE, Industrial Outlook, April, 1996
3. Economic Survey 2014-15
4. Kelkar V.L. and Kumar R., Industrial Growth in the 80s, EPW, January 27, 1990
5. Govt. of India, Planning Commission, 6<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan, 19980-85

6. Dhar P.K., Indian Economy Its Growing Dimensions, Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi
7. Government of India, Economic Survey 2001-2002
8. India 2014, Publication Division, GOI
9. Lewis, John P. Quiet crisis in India
10. Dhar P.N. Economic Reforms : Why we need them (1992)
11. Diwan, Romesh, Economic Reforms- Alternative Policy Package, the Statesman Feb., 21, 1996.
12. Nag D.S., Problems of Underdeveloped Economy, and p.186.
13. World Bank, World Development Report 1991.