
Local Self Government as a Tool of Good Governance

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Abstract

Good Governance is about procedure for making decisions and put them in practice. It is not about the correct decisions only, but about the best possible process for making those decisions. The fundamental requirement of Good Governance is accountability, transparency, rule of law, responsive, equitable and inclusive and participation by the masses. Good Governance cannot be achieved without efficient and effective public administration and management systems. On the other hand, public administration and management systems may be ineffective and inefficient in the environment of poor governance characterized by the lack of basic freedoms, lack of respect for the rule of law, autocratic and unpredictable leadership. Since 1992, local governance in India takes place in two distinct forms rural localities and urban localities under 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments respectively. It is local self government institutions which creates an environment to enjoy democracy. Local self government institutions can better consider the local problems and can solve these problems adequately and properly. As the members of

local self government institutions are local people, so they can realize and understand the gravity of local problems more seriously than state administrators. The encouragement of people in participating democratic activities without bias and prejudice is main achievement of local self government institutions. There is no denying the fact that indicators of Good Governance are highly applicable in the system of local self government institutions.

Key words. Good Governance, Local Self Government.

Introduction

Good is something which is just to the desire or demand. It is good which offers only welfare and happiness to the people but no harm in any way. In the background of governance ‘Good’ means that policies should be framed only in the interest of the people. In the opinion of J. Bentham, it is the “greatest good of the greatest number of people”. These days, democracy is claimed to be the good way of Good Governance as it is the “government of the people, by the people and for the people” which may guarantee greatest good for greatest number. Thus, good in the context of Good

Governance implies those decisions which are made and implemented to ensure welfare of all.

The conception of Good Governance has been shaped and molded for hundreds of years by the consideration procedure of several thinkers and historical events like, The Magna Carta-1215, The Bill of Rights-1689, Glorious Revolution-1688, the American Revolution-1771 and the French Revolution-1789. These world incidences gradually assisted the emergence of sound principles of Good Governance such as “ No taxation without representation” that gave birth to the House of Commons in British Parliament, the transition in England from absolute to constitutional monarchy, the birth of secular state, parliamentary democracy, the political party system and other modern organizations of Good Governance including local self-governance through decentralization of power from the central to the rural government.

The contemporary use of the term Good Governance is in a diverse circumstance. It has been used in the context of western aid to the developing countries and the benchmark set by the formers for the latter's as condition for providing aids. Therefore, development aid by Western countries to the Third World Nations led to the coining of this term. It is in this context

that the World Bank, in one of its documents in 1989, highlighted the idea of Good Governance in the perspective of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Objectives

- To highlight the local self-government as a tool for Good Governance.
- To explore the role of local self-government in encouraging the general masses for participating in decision making process.

Methodology

The present study is descriptive. The data for this study is obtained from secondary sources like books, research papers, government reports etc.

Actors of Governance Mechanism

The functions and responsibilities of the state for development are to be handled by multiple actors like state, civil society, and marketing institutions, whose reach may extend from global to local level and who may interact with each other more in a non-hierarchical way. Development is no longer the sole prerogative of the state.

Characteristics of Good Governance

The main characteristics of Good Governance are accountability, transparency, responsible, equitable and inclusive, effective

and efficient, rule of Law and participatory. In sum, it may be said in brief that Good Governance as a paradigm includes real multiplicity or plurality of institutions which are supposed to be acting in unison to influence development at and from different levels.

Local Self Governance

It is only by these Local Self Governing Institutions that society of rural vicinity can endorse logic of self-sufficiency. The people are the major basis of power for electing the responsible representatives to administer their village dealings in the most excellent probable way. The work of the Local Self Government Institutions is incessant and determined progress of people in the interest of entire village population irrespective of religion, caste and color. The need and necessities of local people can best understood by the Panchayati Raj Institutions and people directly administer and control the development actions of the local area. The huge potentialities of Panchayati Raj Institutions lies in the fact that rural progress go down generally on the people themselves through their elected representatives under the direction and control of State Government. The major aspire of the Panchayati Raj Institutions is to carry decision making and devolution to

fundamental level. We can say that the intention of Panchayati Raj is also to build up sense and accountability of participatory democratic system.

Good Governance and Local Self Governance

In order to have better perceptible about the efforts made by the Indian Government to make sure Good Governance at the rural level, one has to peep into the historical developments in this regard. Local Self Government Institutions existed in rural India since long in one form or the other with a restricted role. Though, after independence, these institutions were envisaged as one of the possible organizations for bringing about socio-economic revolution by giving power to rural masses for self-governance. One of the Directive Principles of State Policy provides that the state shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.

Earlier to the Local Self Government Institutions, the Government of India initiated Community Development Programme and National Extension Service to bring about socio-economic development of rural India. But these could not attain the desired objectives for want of people's participation. Therefore, a Study

Team under the Chairmanship of Balwant Ray Mehta was appointed to examine and report upon the instrument to be evolved through which the active participation of the rural masses could be ensured.

The Study Team recommended a three-tier system of panchayati raj, i.e. Gram Panchayat at the village level, PanchayatSamiti at the block level and ZilaParishad at the district level and authentic transfer of power with sufficient resources to these bodies. It was also recommended that all the developmental schemes for rural areas should be routed through the Local Self Government Institutions. Accepting these recommendations, the panchayati raj system was set up in numerous states of India. Unfortunately, the system could not make much development even after a long test for want of its masters, bureaucrats and rural masses.

Thus, next effort to restore the panchayati raj system was made by the Janata Government in 1977 by appointing a committee headed by Ashok Mehta. Its main recommendations were: two-tier system of panchayati raj, i.e. Mandalpanchayat (consisting of a number of villages having a population between 15 to 20 thousand) and ZilaParishad at the district level; establishment of

NayayPanchayat; party-based elections to PRIs; transferring of developmental functions to ZilaParishads; non-supersession of PRIs on partisan grounds and appointment of a Minister for Panchayats in the State Council of Ministers. All these recommendations could not be put into practice because of the decline of the Janata Government in 1980. However, the analysis of these recommendations make one to observe that had these been implemented it would not have fortified the preferred process of devolution for Good Governance. It may also be right to explain the recommendations of the Committee to transfer from three to two-tier system approximately unwise as it widens the gap between the people and their representative bodies. Moreover, the system of elections on party lines as recommended might not be expressed as a healthy one considering the socio-economic background of the rural masses. In spite of the a variety of steps and initiatives made by the government to bring about perfection in the health of Local Self Government Institutions like setting up of Working Group on District Planning, 1984, Committee on Administrative Arrangements for Rural Development, 1985, the L.M. Singhvi Committee of the Department of Rural Development, Government of India 1986, and the introduction of 64th Constitutional

Amendment in 1989. The position by and large stayed unchanged till the passage of 73rd Constitutional Amendment, 1992.

Conclusion

In the Good Governance one of the main characteristic is participation which can mostly be achieved with the tool of Local Self Governance. The Local Self Government Institutions in itself fulfills all the characteristics of Good Governance. Idea of Good Governance is not static but very dynamic in its natural world. It keeps changing according to sociopolitical and economic changes in a political structure. All the typical features of Good Governance may be attained, if the society is prepared for it. And there is no refuting the fact that signs of Good Governance are extremely appropriate in the system of Local Self Government Institutions. Making sure participation of all section of people in local level decision mechanism, accountability, transparency etc. may be achieved through better implementation of Local Self Government Institutions with all provisions as mentioned in 73rd Constitutional Amendment. A bottom up approach of progress may improve all-round conditions of a vast number of rural masses of a country, and that can only be possible through authorizing grassroots people. Implementation

of decentralization of power through panchayat raj is the best possible way of empowerment. Considering this way, we may think that Good Governance and panchayat raj are inter-complementarily related to each other.

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