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Issues and Challenges for Good Governance in India with a special reference to North-East India

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Abstract:

The concept of 'Good Governance' plays a very important role in modern governmental system. No developmental schemes can be launched and no peaceful atmosphere can be maintained in the country without good governance. Now-a-days, people are very conscious of and keep vigil at the day to day functioning of governmental activities of the country.

To be the good governance, it should be a citizen friendly, citizen caring and responsive administration. It also tries to provide justice, empowerment, employment and efficient delivery of services to its citizens. It must be transparent, accountable and responsible to its people. Barber Conable, the President of World Bank (1986-1991) refers to good governance as "a public service that is efficient, a judicial system that is reliable and an administration that is accountable to its people". The government must read the sentiments and attitudes of the people while making any law and also understand the pulse of its people. There is a question in my mind whether the present government follows the path of good governance especially for the people of North-East India.

This paper tries to throw light on the concept of good governance and addresses the issues that challenge the good governance in India with a special reference to North-East India and also tries to draw some suggestive measures to overcome this issue.

Key words: Governance, Transparent, Accountable, Responsible, Empowerment and Judicial System.

The concept of 'Good Governance' occupies an important place in modern governmental system. No developmental schemes can be launched and no peaceful atmosphere can be maintained without good governance. Now, people are very conscious of and also keep vigil at the day to day functioning of governmental activities of the country.

It (good governance) is a dynamic concept and keeps on changing just like a chameleon which changes its color according to environment. The system adopted by a particular government may lead to good governance to a particular country but that system may not suit other countries. There is no commonly accepted definition of good governance. So,

there is a divergence of opinions about the meaning of good governance among the different schools of thought.

The idea of good governance can be traced back to the writings of Greek political thinkers like Plato (Republic), Aristotle (Politics), etc. The term 'governance' is derived from Greek word 'kubernau' which means 'to steer'. So, literal meaning of 'governance' is to mean the way of governing or the way of steering. Here, it indicates to a process or act or function of exercising authority to regulate the affairs of man in a given territory. It also refers poverty reduction and sustainable development. To be the good governance, it must be a citizen friendly, citizen caring and responsive administration. It also tries to provide justice, empowerment, employment and efficient delivery of services to its people. According to Barber Conable, the former President of World Bank (1986-1991) refers to good governance as 'a public service that is efficient, a judicial system that is reliable and an administration that is accountable to its people'. World Bank, in its annual report in 1998, presented more convincing concept of good governance and put more stress on four key issues (components) like accountability, transparency, predictability and participation. So, the good governance must be transparent, accountable and responsible to its people.

Moreover, the government must read the sentiments and attitudes of the people while formulating public policy i.e. law and also understand the pulse of its people particularly in democratic countries where the ultimate power rests with the people. There is a question in my mind whether the present government follows the path of good governance in India especially for the people of North-East India at present.

This paper tries to address some issues that challenge the good governance in India with a special reference to North-East India and also draws some suggestive measures that may help in resolving this issue.

Objective:

The main objective of this study is

- (i) To explore the issues that challenge good governance in the country with a special reference to North-East India.
- (ii) To draw some suggestions that may help in solving this problem.

Methodology: Descriptive and analytical methods are adopted and requisite information is collected from secondary sources like books, journals, periodicals, newspapers, official reports, etc.

Issues that challenge the Good Governance in India with a special reference to North-East India

I. Corruption: It is one of the major issues that challenge the good governance in India. According to 2018 Corruption Perceptions Index reported by Transparency International, India is the 78th least corrupt nation out of 175 countries in the world. India is very rich in natural and mineral resources. Due to rampant corruption, India cannot make much progress and can never achieve its target. There is a nexus between ministers, bureaucrats and traders. There is a lot of scams in India like Bofors scam, Security Scam, Fodder scam,

Sugar scam, Telecom scam, AgustaWestland Helicopter deal, Dassault Rafale deal, etc. Those who are involved swindle off public funds for their personal gains. There is a question of implementation of MGNREGA, Bharat Nirman, Public Distribution System and other social welfare schemes of the country and also whether these reach out to the needy or targeted persons. The Central government instituted many agencies/bodies to curb or check corruption in the country like Central Vigilance Commission, Central Bureau of Investigation, Lokpal, Lokayukta, etc. These agencies / bodies are supposed to check corruption but the problem is that the body which is supposed to check corruption is itself corrupt; then how to check corruption in India? Sometimes, the Enforcement Directorate questions the top officials of Central Vigilance Commission and Central Bureau of Investigation over the accumulation of disproportionate property.

II. Uneducated Electorates: Though the literacy rate has increased considerably in India but rate of educated people are still far from satisfactory. When India conducted the first general election in 1952, literacy rate of the country was just about 18% (1951 census) but now it reaches 72.99 % (according to 2011 census). The term 'education' indicates here the all-round development of human faculty through rational thinking. Indian electorates are not free from their parochial outlooks like casteism, linguism, communalism, tribalism, etc. These parochial outlooks influence the electorates at the time of election, all evident in slogans like 'Jat ki beti Jatko; Jat ki vote Jatko' and also at the time of ministry formation. Moreover, they (electorate) can be easily influenced or purchased by money. So, if the electorates do not elect the rightful candidates, then how we can expect good governance from these representatives?

III. Women Empowerment: Women constitute nearly 50% of the total population of the country but their participation in the decision making /law making process is quite unsatisfactory. In the 16th Lok Sabha Election (2014) and 17th Lok Sabha Election (2019), female/women representatives were 11.41% and 14.36% respectively whereas female representatives in British House of Commons was nearly 30% (2015 Election).

Swami Vivekananda says, "It is impossible to think about the welfare of world unless the condition of women is improved. It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing." For women empowerment in legislation, the 108th Constitutional Amendment Bill, 2008 popularly called Women Reservation Bill was tabled in the Parliament but it is yet to be passed. This Bill seeks 33% of seats should be reserved for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. It is very essential for adequate representation of women in the legislation so that they can ventilate their grievances and can enact some laws for the well-being of women in the society.

IV. Role of Money Power: In India, politics is a game played only by the capitalist i.e. moneyed men. Karl Marx, Father of Scientific Socialism, regards the state is an executive committee of bourgeoisie. Politicians consider election an investment. Only economically sound politicians contest election and distribute money among the voters for casting their votes in favour of candidates at the time of election. Once they get the seats, they try to

recover the amount they spent in last election and try to amass more amounts for next election purpose. So, they misuse public funds and other social/public welfare schemes like MLA Local Areas Development Fund, MP Local Areas Development Fund, MGNREGA, PDS, Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awaas Yojana, etc. with connivance of bureaucrats.

V. Criminalization of Politics: Criminalization of politics means allowing criminals access to politics and to contest in election. The criminalization of political process and unholy nexus between politicians, civil servants and traders are having a baneful influence on public policy formulation and governance. Many criminal activists join in politics and politics gives them protection so long as they are in power. Indian judicial system provides a room for criminal activists by following the tactics of justice delaying then justice denying. According to Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR) report, 17% of 5830 candidates contesting Lok Sabha election (2014) had declared criminal charges in their affidavits submitted to the Election Commission of India and 10% of these candidates had serious criminal charges like murder and rape charges. So, how can we think of good governance from these criminal politicians?

VI. Insurgent Groups: It is also one of the most important issues that challenge good governance in India especially in the North-East. More than 100 insurgent groups are still operating in this region. However, the Ministry of Home Affairs (GoI) declared 16 insurgent groups as unlawful organizations under the Unlawful (Prevention) Activities Act, 1967. There is a strong insurgent- politician nexus in the North-East India. For example, United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) was able to become a large outfit primarily due to the support provided by the first AGP regime under Sri P. K. Mahanta in Assam. In Tripura, National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) was patronized by the Congress and All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) by the CPM. These insurgent outfits target the civilian population during elections as a part of their strategy to help their patron political parties. In insurgency- affected areas like Manipur, all government servants contribute to different insurgent groups. The cashier or accountant of each department deducts the contribution from the employees' salaries and pays to the insurgent groups. The politicians pay the highest shares to the insurgent groups. Sometimes, some insurgent groups demand their share from the executing agencies. In Manipur, many officers were shot for resisting terrorist demands like the Director (Tourism), an IAS officer was shot for non-payment of ransom; the Divisional Engineer (telephones) was killed because he did not waive the bills of two PCOs operated by NSCN-IM and PLA; the Chief Engineer, Loktak Project was killed by KYKL insurgents on January 12, 2000, etc. If this trend continues so, the concept of good governance will go away.

VII. People's Representatives: As India adopts parliamentary democratic models both at the centre and the state levels, the voters elect their representatives periodically through universal adult franchise; but the question is whether that representative represents the people of that particular constituency where he gets hardly 25% to 35% of voters casting their votes in his/ her favour but majority section (i.e. 65% to 75%) of voters are against him/ her in the constituency. So, how can he/ she be called popularly elected representative?

If a person is not popular in his/ her own constituency, how can we expect good things from him/her for the society/ the state/ the country? Though it may be a tough job for the Election Commission of India, it is very essential to change the modalities of the norm for people's representatives to this effect that a candidate in order to be declared elected must obtain more than 50% of total number voters or more than 50% of total number of votes casted of his/ her constituency. It is interesting to know the contesting candidates' profile at present. Most of them are moneyed men, contractors, people belonging to business groups, criminals and lawyers but the number of intellectuals is very negligible. Thus, we need to encourage the intellectuals to join in politics so that they can do something good for the society and the country at large.

VIII. Role of Bureaucrats: Bureaucracy is one of the issues that also challenge the good governance in India. It is shocking but it is a fact that most of the state government officials (bureaucrats) are selected and appointed under the influence of money power. For example, 19 officers including BJP MP's daughter were arrested in connection with Assam Cash-for-Job scam in July, 2018. These officers were selected through an examination conducted in 2016 by the Assam Public Service Commission (APSC) when Rakesh Paul was its Chairman. Some other APSC officials were also arrested including Rakesh Paul (Chairman), Samedur Rahman (member), Basanta Kumar Doley and Pabitra Kaibarta (Assistant Controller of Examinations) for their alleged involvement in the scam. In a historic judgement on October 18, 2019, Manipur High Court quashed the result of MPSC, 2016 on the charges of several illegalities and irregularities in the selection of candidates of Manipur Civil Services Combined Competitive Examination. It is to be noted that the Manipur Civil Services Combined Competitive Examination, 2016 was conducted by the Manipur Public Service Commission for selection of 82 posts of MCS, MPS, SDC and EO. So, it clearly shows that there is a lot of corruption in the state level combined competitive examination conducted by its public service commissions. Once they get the job, they try to recover the amount they spent in the appointment of job i.e. cash for job. There is no sense of sincerity, honesty, dedication, responsibility, accountability, etc. in the minds of those bureaucrats who get the job by adopting the technique of cash for job at the time of their appointments. So, how can we think of good governance from these corrupt bureaucrats?

Suggestions:

- (a) It is absolutely necessary to change the mindset of the people if we think for good governance in the country. People should not take money or any other form of offers from the candidates at the time of election. If the people do not allow the candidate to spend a single penny other than nomination fee, then the representative may not indulge in corruption and may do something good for the society and the country at large.
- (b) The voters can elect the rightful candidate if they are politically educated without considering caste, language, religion, tribe, sex, place of birth, etc. So, it is very essential to impart political knowledge to the voters about current local, national and international issues.

- (c) Women Reservation Bill should get passed immediately.
- (d) Any criminal charges against any candidate should be referred to a fast track court to prove whether he / she committed the crime. If found guilty, he / she should get debarred from contesting election.
- (e) Election Commission of India must prescribe the educational qualification of the candidates. If a person wants to contest election, he / she must be a graduate from any recognized university in any discipline.
- (f) Some of the devices of direct democracy should be introduced in India like recall, referendum, plebiscite, etc. People should have the right to call back their representatives in their constituencies to question the implementation of their promises before them (public) at the time of election campaigns. So-called popularly elected representatives hardly seen interacting with people of his / her constituency after the election. The issues other than national defence or national security of the country, like referendum and plebiscite are to be introduced in the country if it involves the substantial question of national importance like the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, National Population Register, National Register of Citizenship, etc.
- (g) The Election Commission of India must have to supervise the activities of its officials like Observers, Micro-Observers and other election related officials whether they discharge their duties sincerely, faithfully or honestly and whether the candidates cross the limit of poll expenditure.
- (h) The present ceiling of poll expenditure (MP, Lok Sabha) is too high i.e. Rs. 70 lakh for bigger states like Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, etc. and Rs. 54 lakh for smaller states like Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Tripura, etc. It will not be easy on the part of elected representatives to recover his amount (ceiling of Rs.70 lakh / Rs.54 lakh) what he/ she spent in the last election by his /her salary. So, the elected representatives may indulge in corruption later. Thus, the Election Commission of India must have to reduce the limit of poll expenditure of the candidates.
- (i) It is necessary to think of other possibilities of change of electoral pattern / procedure from universal adult franchise system to functional representation, proportional representation or some other systems. Because in the universal adult franchise system, the value of vote of an intellectual is equal to the value of vote of a factory worker or rickshaw puller.
- (j) The Central Government must read the sentiments and attitudes of the people of North-East while formulating any policy if it involves the issue pertaining to this region. The people of the North-East feel that the Central Government treats this region in a step-motherly manner. There is a trust deficit in the minds of the people of this region towards the Central Government. So, it is necessary to erase this concept from their minds by its activities (Central Government).
- (k) State Public Service Commission must be sincere, honest, transparent, etc. while selecting the candidates for civil services because they (civil servants) are the backbone

of India's administration. The effective administration of this country is largely dependent on them.

- (1) Insurgency problem is to be resolved through political dialogue like Mizo Peace Accord (June, 1986), recently concluded Bodo Accord (January, 2020), etc. because common people are really the sufferers and they are tired of this armed conflict / armed struggle between the security forces and the insurgents in the North-East. So, peace can be restored and development schemes can be launched in this region,

Conclusion: Good Governance plays a big role for effective administration of a country. If there is good governance, there will be legitimacy. Then there will be peace and development in the country. For attaining good governance, it is very essential that the government must read the sentiments and attitudes of the people and also understand the pulse of its people. People (voters) are to elect the rightful candidates (political executive) in the election and the State Public Service Commissions are to select the most deserving candidates (non-political permanent executive) without any favour or any bias. There should be proper co-ordination and co-operation among the people, their representatives and bureaucrats in the country. Moreover, proper co-ordination among the different organs of the government with certain mutual checks and balances are also very essential for good governance. So, a nation can move forward if there is good governance in the country.

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