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# IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF GOVERNANCE TRANSPARENCY IN INDIA

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**ABSTRACT**

Transparency in governance refers to the absence of secrecy and mystery between the Government and those being governed. It implies that the Government shares as much information with the citizenry as possible. The information shared should not be ambiguous or selective, but complete and correct. A transparent Government does not just inform the people about decisions that affect them, but also lets them know the grounds on which such decisions have been taken. Transparency also implies that all rules and regulations regarding the functioning of the various arms of the government and the powers and duties of its officers are in the public domain. While transparency offers great advantages to the people, it also has many benefits for the Government. For one, people have much greater sense of trust in governments they deem to be transparent and they are more likely to understand if the country is placed in a difficult situation. The two most important recent developments regarding transparency in governance in India have been the passing of the Right to information Act and the emergence of the concept of e-Governance. The passage of the Right to information act in 2005 has been a truly revolutionary event, in the sense that it has empowered citizens to seek information on all public matters without asking for justification, sets a time-frame within which officials must provide information, and also provides for punishments for those officers who wrongfully, or with mal-intent, deny information to the public.

**KEYWORDS**

Transperancy, Accountability and Governance.

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**INTRODUCTION**

Good Governance: Indian Experiment For the success of any event or programme a centralized drive is necessary to prepare the stake-holders to hold their hands on to it. It could be called a descent and ascent process. 7 Interestingly, the 73rd Amendment with the proclaimed objective of democratic decentralization was not a response to pressure from the grass roots, but to an increasing recognition that the institutional initiatives of the

proceeding decades had not delivered the desired results of ushering equity and social justice. The growing conviction that big government cannot achieve growth and development in a society without people's direct participation and initiative heralded the enactments of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act and the subsequent state-wise Panchayati Raj Acts in India. This process of decentralization of power, provision for participation of citizens in local decision making and implementation of schemes affecting the livelihood and quality of life was pushed vigorously with the aim to accelerate thus the 'top down', process of government to an interactive process and thus make inroads in to the internationally acclaimed standards of good governance. There emerged a political consensus that governance has to extend beyond conventional bureaucracies and involve actively citizen and consumer groups at all levels, to inform the public and disadvantaged groups, so as to ensure service delivery and programme execution through autonomous elected bodies. 8 That the traditional government-citizen relationship, cast in a donor-recipient mould and the bureau-centric power focused approach, per force has to undergo change in the new scenario.

Governance is described as the formation and stewardship of the formal and informal rules that regulate the public realm, the arena in which state as well as economic and societal actors interact to make decisions (ODI). The notion of "Governance" is used from prehistoric time by human civilization. Governance can be used in several contexts such as corporate governance, international governance, national governance and local governance. Governance elucidates the mechanisms an organization uses to make certain that its components follow its established processes and policies. It is the primary way to maintain oversight and accountability in a loosely coupled organizational structure.

The role of governance on national and local level: Key factors of development include education, health, and security which are public goods to be provided by central and local governments. The share of GDP managed by government is positively correlated with the level of country's development. Performance of government is a central component of governance and a pre-requisite for successful development of a country.

In India, according to tenth Five Year Plan, "Governance relates to the management of all such processes that, in any society, define the environment which permits and enables individuals to raise their capability levels, on one hand, and provide opportunities to realise their potential and enlarge the set of available choices, on the other" .

Plentiful research have been done to elucidate the ideologies of governance. According to Tandon, good governance is "the joint responsibility of the state, market and citizens to mobilize public resources and promote public decision-making towards the advancement of common public goods." The theoretical concept that explicate and prioritise public goods, institutional mechanisms and structures for delivery of those public goods, and processes by which such structures and mechanisms operate. It emphasizes articulation of interests by various stakeholders, specially the hitherto excluded and the marginalized. Governance identifies that differences among various interests around public goods, and the preferred modes of delivering the same, would necessarily exist in a democratic society, and it, hence, lays emphasis on negotiated and dialogical approaches to deal with those differences.

The Eleventh Plan presents six benchmarks of such democratic governance:

- Free and fair and timely elections of all spheres of political authority.
- Transparency and accountability of all institutions of the state to citizens.
- Efficient and effective delivery of socio-economic public services.
- Effective devolution of authority, resources and capabilities to PRIs and municipalities.

Rule of law, where legal rights are clear and understood, and legal compliance and enforcements of those rights is time-bound and swift.

Needs and interests of hitherto excluded sections of society are privileged and included, with dignity.

It has been revealed in reports that the Government of India is following a set of standards for reforming governance in the nation, which are essentially citizen-centric transparency, accountability and efficiency of all institutions, agencies and actors of the government, with particular attention to those citizens who have been basically excluded so far. Governance is the exercise of economic, political, and managerial authority to manage account affairs at all level. Characteristics of governance: The main features of good governance as described below:

Participation: Researchers have stated that Participation is a major factor both by males and females for good governance. Participation could be either direct or through legitimate intermediate institutions or representatives. It can be established that representative democracy does not necessarily mean that the concerns of the most susceptibility in society would be taken into consideration in decision making. Participation needs to be informed and organized.

Rule of law: Good governance requires impartial legal structures that are prescribed neutrally. It also requires full defence of human rights, particularly those of minorities. Impartial enforcement of laws requires an independent judiciary and an impartial and incorruptible police force. Basically, the rule of law is termed as the institutional process of setting, interpreting and implementing laws and other regulations. It means that decisions taken by government must be founded in law and that private firms and individuals are protected from arbitrary decisions. Reliability entails governance that is free from distortionary incentives through corruption, favouritism, patronage or capture by narrow private interest groups; guarantees property and personal rights; and achieves some sort of social stability. This offers a degree of reliability and predictability that is vital for firms and individuals to take good decisions.

Responsiveness: Governance needs that institutions and processes try to serve all stake holders within reasonable timeframe.

**Consensus oriented**

Good governance necessitates intervention of various interest groups in the culture to reach a broad agreement in a society for the benefit of the whole community and the way it can be accomplished. It also requires broad and long-term perspective for needs of sustainable human development and how to achieve goals of such development.

**Equity and inclusiveness**

The welfare of a society depends on ensuring that all its members feel that they have a stake in it and do not feel that they have been excluded from the mainstream of the society. This requires all groups, but particularly the most vulnerable, have opportunity to improve or maintain their wellbeing.

**Transparency in Governance**

Transparency is broadly accepted as a major principle of good governance (World Bank (2000) the UNDP has perceived that transparency means "sharing information and acting in an open manner" (1997). Furthermore, transparency allows stakeholders to collect information that may be critical to uncovering abuses and defending their interests. As per UNDP (1997) transparent systems have impeccable measures for civic decision-making and open channels of communication among stakeholders and officials, and make a wide range of information easily accessible. Transparency represents that decisions taken and their enforcement are done in a way that follows rules and regulations. According to Tandon (2002), transparency means that the criteria, process and systems of decision-making are openly known to all in a public manner. The statement of Right to Information Act of 2015 set the stage for the transparency in the operational of the government and its some agencies. Under this Act, access to information from a public agency has become a statutory right of every citizen. In its depiction, it has been repelled that the system of government in India is so resistant that common people do not have much information about how decisions are taken and public resources are employed. In effect, RTI Act is a media for greater transparency about the manner of functioning of public agencies. The establishment of RTI act in few states as follows.

Information about who the designated Public Information Officers (PIOs) were in the district was not available in 90% of the districts;

Some respondents felt that Public Information Officers were not at all obliging in providing information even when.

Self-disclosure mandated under section 4 of the RTI Act was not made in 90% of the districts in these states.

Main chucks of this Act is self-disclosure of information in public field. It is expected that if passable information is available, citizens can demand services and claim rights due to them from suitable authorities and officials. The status of self-disclosure is rather poor countrywide. Current study conducted by PRIA and CHRI (2009) about status of self-disclosure in the field of food security exhibited that Food Corporation of India and PDS (civil supply departments) have sensibly clear web-based self-disclosure at national level. But, the quality and convenience of such self-disclosed information at district level becomes very poor and non-existent. It specified that a normal resident eager of accessing basic necessaries from the PDS system cannot get any clear information from the system of self-disclosure currently being practiced in few states. Transparency is required to make the system of public service delivery effective.

It permits ready information to the citizens in a manner that they may be able to assertion their rights. However, sheer knowledge of what entitlements are, and who is responsible for fulfilling them, is not sufficient to ensure that public services are passably and effectively delivered to the 'intended' recipients.

**Accountability in Governance**

Accountability become crucial concept in maintaining good governance. Simply defined, accountability means being responsible for the performance of works assigned to a person; if task allotted for selection of beneficiaries for a respected scheme, then accountability will specify whether the selection is carried out by applying the principles. Additionally, it is also important to be clear about the responsibility for performance of those tasks; person responsible and whether it is clear to them. It also highlights that whether the authorities have the required capacities and resources to accomplish the tasks.

Accountability is imperative to Governance as it evaluates the ongoing effectiveness of public officials or public bodies ensures that they are performing to their full potential, providing value for money. There are many types of accountability in governance that include Horizontal and Vertical Accountability. The main establishments of accountability are parliament and the judiciary, provide parallel accountability. Horizontal accountability, which is the capacity of state organizations to prevent corruptions by other agencies public and government branches. Otherwise, vertical accountability is the means through which citizens, mass media and civil society seek to enforce standards of good performance on bureaucrats. Social Accountability is a method to structure the accountability that depend on civic commitment, precisely a condition whereby normal citizens and civil society organizations contribute in exacting accountability. Such accountability is termed as society driven horizontal accountability. Political accountability usually establishes itself in the notion of individual ministerial responsibility.

Normally in all government institutions, accountability is identified in a vertically aloft way. Answerability to the designated boss above the departmental hierarchy. All government systems and agencies have elaborate practices and procedures for such upward reporting and answerability in respect of performance of designated tasks within the time and budget frameworks available. Besides this vertical accountability, all government institutions have systems of horizontal accountability which safeguard the state agencies. For example, Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) audits the planned expenditures of national and state governments.

- It can be established that accountability can only be determined if
- Tasks are clearly specified.
- There are some concrete steps to complete Time and budget details.
- The person/position/team responsible for the task performance is clear to all.

- There is a clear laid down procedure for reporting progress and completion of the task to an authority upward in the hierarchy.
- Existence of a mechanism effective task performance for course correction.

Link between Transparency and Accountability: Accountability is the harmonising function of Transparency; if system of governance is apparent enough it would promote accountability, Transparency and Accountability are related in its mission of an organization, (Tandon, 1995). Some merits of accountability and transparency in governance. Transparency and Accountability in the Governance reduces occurrence of corruption, favouritism, nepotism and improves the accountability of the staff.

Practically, the governance movement will encounter major drawbacks. Poor governance is being increasingly considered as major root causes of all corrupt practices within societies. There are numerous challenges in maintaining good governance. First is the corruption. In every country, huge amount of national expenditure is wasted in corruption. Another major factor is process of globalization. Rosabeth Kanter stated that globalization can be described as a process of change stemming from amalgamation of increasing cross-border activity and information technology enabling virtually instant communication at international level. There are many challenges that arise from globalization that will affect to the good governance. The arrival of foreign labour because of the borderless economy. Foreign companies are easily entering in national market. Globalization also impact on rules and regulations such as trade related activities, migration of labour force from other country, Small Scale enterprises and custom and excise duty. Severe Political interferences also adversely affect on good governance. Experts advised that it is important for civil servants to have neutral attitude when it comes to political believe. Extremism also disrupt good governance. It is accepted that a good governance system and democratic system two sides of same coin. T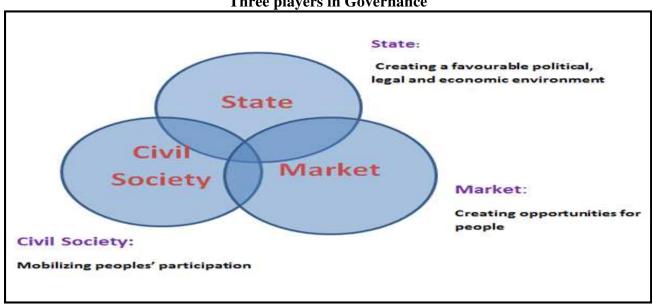his infers the creation of an institutional framework recognizing the legitimate will of the people. Extremism has certainly become the menace in many parts of the world these days. Extremism is deteriorating common moral standards of the society. With the thorough appraisal of governance features, it is found that enriched governance needs an integrated, long-term strategy built upon cooperation between government and inhabitants. It involves participation of institutions. Accountability, Transparency and rule of law are technical matters to some extent, which is interactive to make government as legitimate and effective.
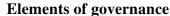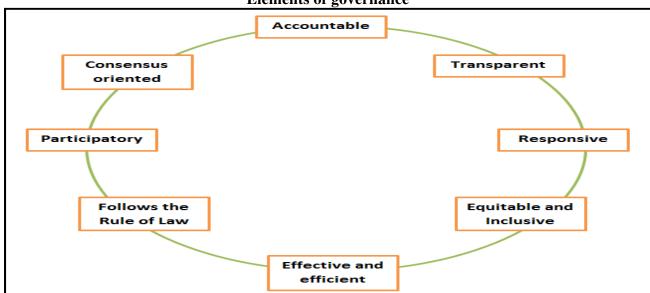
**Institutions of Transparency in India**

The paradox in Indian Institutional framework to ensure transparency and thereby accountability is inescapable. The de jure policies might appear to be all in place, and yet in the de facto implementation and delivery, there is rampant corruption, absenteeism, indifference, incompetence, inefficiencies or outright failures. At the heart of these failures, is a systemic crisis of accountability. In fact, some observers have argued that the Indian state, its institutions, and the rules that govern them are structured to avoid accountability altogether (Mehta 2003, Saxena 2004). Transparency is sometimes in tension with responsiveness and representation in tension with both. The crucial point is that harmonizing the different components of accountability cannot be done by conceptual fiat. It is an empirical matter addressed by institutional design and the concrete work of politics.

**Three players in Governance**



State:
Creating a favourable political, legal and economic environment

Market:
Creating opportunities for people

Civil Society:
Mobilizing peoples' participation

**Elements of governance**



Accountable
Consensus oriented
Transparent
Participatory
Responsive
Follows the Rule of Law
Equitable and Inclusive
Effective and efficient

**CONCLUSION**
Change in the institutional function is need of the hour. Focus has shifted from secrecy to transparency, from working in isolation to working with the people, from arbitrariness to accountability for actions. These include emphases on substantive improvements in open government laws and governmental compliance with them, especially in terms of the timeliness and comprehensibility of disclosures, as well as on strengthening institutions that can provide more informed and rigorous resolutions of informational disclosure disputes.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST**
We declare that we have no conflict of interest.

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