

Impact of Good Governance in Panchayatiraj Institutions: A Study

Ramesh Hazarika, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Madhabdev College, Lakhimpur, Assam. email: rameshhaz@gmail.com

Abstract

Today, the world over emphasized has been given upon good governance, so that the people of the world can attain a quality of life. The concept of good governance has been forcefully introduced by the United Nations (UN), in different developing countries like India, since the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was undertaken. Since then in every governmental institution and department, governance plays an important role and with this good governance, an attempt has been made to uplift every section of the people.

India is a country of villages. Near about 80 per cent of people live in rural areas. In rural areas, the Panchayat has played an important role in the developmental process. The developmental programmes and plans are implemented and executed by the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Hence, good governance in PRIs is very much essential for the better interest of the people. In this paper, an attempt has been made to discuss the impact of good governance in PRIs of India.

Keywords: *Good Governance, Rural Development, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Backwardness, Rural Poverty.*

Introduction

Good governance and rural development are two important tasks of our country. For the all-around development of the people, the nation emphasis upon urban and rural development. In India concern, rural development is more important because more than 80 per cent of the total population lives in rural India. Since the time of independence, the government of India has been emphasized rural development by adopting different developmental plans and programmes. Like

the rural, the development plans were also taken for the urban areas. But, the entire attempts in more or less size were failed due to bad management and lack of governance. Hence, social scientists and economists have been given weightage in the introduction of good governance in the process of development. If this system is not implemented then the country can never be strong, developed and free from backwardness and poverty.

Panchayat has been the backbone of India Villages. Rural development requires hard work, dedication, responsiveness and accountability of both official and non-officials to make rural development a success. Despite strong trends of urbanization, the vast majority of the population is in rural still lives below the poverty line. To ensure a balanced economic development the fruits of development should percolate to the grass-root levels. It requires changes in the economic, social, political and psychological behaviour of rural people who are illiterate and ignorant. Democratic decentralization aims at developing rural areas by the people themselves with the support of good governance by local bureaucracy. Panchayati raj institutions are the instruments to carry out the programmes of rural development. Good governance is of great significance in making Panchayati raj institutions functional and efficient.

Objectives

Considering the importance of the research question, the following objectives are sketched to find out a good conclusion of the research problem.

1. To analyze the rationality of good governance in Panchayati raj institutions.
2. To find out the characteristics of good governance in India.
3. To find out the problem and prospects governance in panchayats.
4. To make suggestions for better improvements governance system in India.

Methodology

To test the hypothesis and the objectives of the research question historical and descriptive methodology have been adopted. The necessary data has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The necessary data were also collected from secondary sources viz. books,

journals, newspapers, government reports and documents, related published articles of different authors, etc. This paper is no doubt historical and analytical but empirical.

Concept of good Governance

Good Governance is a process for making and implementing decisions of governmental bodies and agencies. Because of its emphasis upon proper execution of government policy rather than the making best decision. It also gives stress upon the making of the best possible decision and wants to make that decision in the proper sense. Good governance is critical for ensuring social inclusion, only through Panchayats which are constitutionally mandated local democratic institutions, can ensure public, people participation, accountability transparency and responsibility.

Characteristics of good governance

According to U.N. Economic and social commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESPACP) good governance has eight characteristics:

- a. Participation: Participation in administration by both men and women is the key cornerstone of good governance. Participation may be direct or indirect.
- b. Rule of law: Good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced impartially. It also requires the protection of human rights, independent and imperial police force, and bureaucracy.
- c. Transparency: It means that information is freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their enforcement, right to Information Act of India plays a very effective role in this regard.
- d. Responsiveness: Good governance requires that institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe.
- e. Consensus oriented: Good governance requires reaching a broad consensus in society on what is in the best interest of the community and how this can be achieved sustainably and prudently.

f. Equity and inclusiveness: A society's wellbeing depends on the overall development of its people including women, poor, as well as economically and socially backward people without which real progress of the society cannot be achieved. Their proper representation in the decision-making process is very important.

g. Effectiveness and Efficiency: Good governance means the process and institutions produce results that meet the needs of stakeholders while making the best use of resources at their disposal.

h. Accountability: Accountability is a key requirement of good governance. Every governmental system whether is public or private should be accountable to the people. Accountability cannot be enforced without transparency and rule of law.

Good governance is an important part of the socio-economic development of the country. The concept of governance is simple "The way those with power use that power". It centres on the responsibility of government and governing bodies to meet the needs of the people as opposed to the select groups in society. It is seen as a set of values, policies and institutions through which the society manages economic, political as well as a social processes at different levels. The issue of good governance in recent times emerged at the front position of the agenda for sustainable human development. According to the UNDP policy, Governance for sustainable human development, the concept relates to the quality of the relationship between the government and the citizen whom it serves and protects. According to World Bank's document 1992 'governance is how power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resource for development.' Any government to rule successfully and in a citizen-friendly approach has to ensure good governance. Governance has emerged as one of the crucial subjects in the country. We can plan, mobilize investment, train personnel, raise financial resources, induct modern technologies and set for ourselves the goals for economic development, equity, social justice and better quality of life for all. Good governance should demonstrate the capacity to shepherd in the decentralization of powers that would prevent the sense of alienation among

the elected representatives. It would help the welfare state in its true connotations where people would be looked after by the government as part and parcel of the government machinery. It demands transparent administration by letting both not only decision-making criteria and programmes drawn up open to the public but also by involving them. Good governance is epitomized by and can be secured by sound, responsive and competent administration, respect to basic human rights and values, strengthen democratic, institutional as well as a structural frameworks to ensure accountability and transparency. Governance needs to be citizen-oriented, citizen-centric, and citizen-friendly. To bring new developments in the system, it is much called for the governance system to include the required kind of changes, keeping in mind the need of the day. The government is primarily an information processing system, analyzing and interpreting data and making decisions based on them. We need to recognize that the goals of modern government are much more than economic efficiency.

Good governance in Panchayatraj Institutions

The need and demand for good governance has increased with the rapid expansion of the economy and the growing awareness and assertion of rights by an increasingly educated population, Accountable, Participatory good governance is critical for ensuring social inclusion, only through Panchayats which are constitutionally mandated local democratic institutions, can ensure public, people participation and accountability. State governments regarding devolving more programmes and activities to Panchayat is that Panchayat has the poor capacity and will not able to deliver, because of the weakness in terms of administrative and technical capacity within Panchayats leads to low capacity, inadequate devolution, disempowered institutions. Developing strong Panchayati raj institutions is essential to improve good governance and delivery of services which involves the redistribution of power, institution building and development processes that improve accountability to the people. Development is looked upon as holistic, which creates an environment to foster a long, healthy, creative life among people and make the governance processes which are locally relevant, democratic, participative and responsive.

Challenges and prospects of good governance in Panchaytiraj

After completing the 25th anniversary of the 73rd Amendment, Panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) are simultaneously a remarkable success and a staggering failure. Even as the government completed almost 60 years of Panchayati Raj in India, a quarter of these institutions for grassroots democracy are in a deplorable condition. However, 24 per cent of panchayats do not have basic amenities and lack infrastructure to carry out even day-to-day works. There are 2.52 lakh panchayats in India, but 60,000 of these do not even have their buildings.

There are lots of challenges which are facing by Panchayatiraj Institution in India are discussed as below-

Conceptual confusion: The present concept does not visualize even a single unit of Panchayati raj Institutions as an instrument of planning as well as implementation agency i.e. different rural development programmes. There is also a lack of clarity about Panchayatiraj Institutions as agencies that can manage routine administration, infrastructure and bring about socio-economic welfare of the rural population. There are multiplicities of agencies in the rural scene charged with the responsibility of undertaking a plethora of developmental activities.

Variability of Structure: There is no uniformity of structural arrangement in the Panchayati raj institution among the different states of India. Some states accept three tiers and some others having two or four-tier which create major administrative and functional problems regarding uniform measures to be taken.

Financial Resources: Panchayati raj institutions are facing lots of financial difficulties. It is not necessary to mention that the quality and variety of activities that the Panchayati raj Institutions are expected to perform will depend mostly on the resources at their command. Due to lack of timely allocations of the fund by the state and central government and mismanagement, corruption by authority and public leader, lack of active participation of local people, shortage of expert manpower to prepare the plan and programs for rural development. Fund become underutilized or misutilized.

Socio-Economic and Political Conditions: Major section of the office bearer and elected members of Panchayats are from socio-economically dominant sections of society and politically those who have a god hand behind them are permissible to participate in elections and selection irrespective of quality and efficiency of elected members. Most of the elected members have to deserve to their duties by political red tape. So, they have no soul right to functioning the responsibilities properly. The leadership of the Panchayati raj Institutions acts as a “gatekeeper” to prevent the flow of benefits to the weaker sections of the rural community.

Lack of Efficiency of Authority: An efficient, adequate, responsive and committed administration is the essential condition for good governance in Panchayati raj. We find that efficient bureaucrats are not employed in Panchayati raj Institution for better implementation in the plan, projects, schemes in the rural area of the country. But in practice, it is observed that the bureaucracy is getting alienated and has begun to bypass these institutions. So the system has fall shorts of efficient planners, executors and administrators.

Government’s control and supervision: Although development programs are decentralized to rural or grassroots levels from the top of the central and state legislature, they are the sole authority that controls over the whole program or plan. PRI’s have no right to designing the actual requirement of the rural area of the country. They are acting as executive agencies of central or state legislature.

Corruption: The high level of corruption in PRI’s has been widely perceived as a major obstacle in improving the quality of governance. Bureaucracy is called the engine of good governance. The government implemented different welfare policies like PDS, NRHM, MGNREGA, Prime Minister’s Jan Dhan Yojna etc. which are very influential for good governance. But because of corrupt practices among our bureaucrats, our Government cannot achieve success in the implementation of these programmes.

Women Empowerment: As women comprise almost 50% of the total population, it is unfair that they are not adequately represented in government institutions and other allied sectors. So to

ensure good governance it is essential to ensure the empowerment of women. There is the provision of 33% reservation for women in the Panchayati raj system continued. But the inadequacy of participatory women makes mismanagement of PRI's. Due to the lack of proper facilities provided to improve the quality and efficiency of women, they are lying under empowered.

Ignorance and poor participation of rural people: More than 70% of the total population of the country lives in the rural area. Most of them are guided by superstition, religious faith, and they remain illiterate. Because of these reasons they are ignorant and unaware of the provisions provided to them. So they are participating in PRI's and good governance is very poor.

Suggestion:

1. There should be a uniform system of election across the country as it is conducted by the State Election Commission. This leads to a functional uniformity as the Constitution gives them equal status and therefore there should be uniformity in the procedure followed in the functioning of the Panchayati raj institutes throughout India.
2. There should be a strong anti-corruption mechanism to fight the widespread corruption in PRI's.
3. Adequate training and the infrastructural facility should be provided to the PRI's officials.
4. Qualified and expert bureaucrats should be employed in the functional and planning process.
5. Political dominance should be removed.
6. PRI should be facilitated with improve technology.
7. System of Gram Sabha should be enriched with more power so that it can satisfy the rural people and concerned authority.

8. People or rural areas or women should be educated and empowered so that people participation and governance of PRI's can be improved.
9. e-governance should be implemented properly that can be glitter the transparency and accountability and responsibility.
10. Plan and Programs of PRI's should be based on rural requirements or need-based objectives.
11. People's right to information and accessibility to the Panchayats must be ensured making the functioning of PRI's transparent.

Conclusion

Hence, the need for periodically rethinking and even remodelling of the concept of Good Governance is possible if our policies are implemented with the quality of manpower, sincerely and efficiently. We need to change the perspective, poor training, procedures and encourage good people. Unless and until the mindset of bureaucrats is hard to change and set of procedures are reoriented towards self decision-making good governance is impossible with transparency and accountability. The Panchayats of the country though behind from the administrative modernization but with the introduction of administrative reform and monitoring in the functions of the same, the Panchayats are now in positions to handle the governmental directions and programmes taken for rural development. The participation of educated people in Panchayats is also significant in this regard. Though there are different problems in introductions of good governance in this decentralized unit gradually it is enabled to cope with the situation.

References

1. Bajpai, Ravindra, Role of Media in Rural Development, BVCON - 15
2. Simon, D., Recent Trends in Development Theory and Policy: Implication for Democratization and Government, *Governance-Nigeria and the World*, CENCOD: 2004
3. Umehali, E. E., *Rural Resources Farm Business Management and Rural Development*: Computer Edge Publishers: 2006
4. Hornby, A. S. (2001) Advance Dictionary of Current English

5. Mandal, Sagar and Ray, G.L., Rural Development, Kalyani Publishing, Ludhiana: 2007
p3 *Journal of Business & Economic Policy Vol. 1, No. 1; June 2014*
6. Bhaker, Suresh Kumar, Role of NGOs in Rural Development in India, Journal of Business & Economic Policy Vol. 1, No. 1; June 2014
7. Lal, Banarsi, People Participation in Rural Development, early Times, 2001
8. Saxena, N.C. What is meant by peoples' participation?
9. Minogue M, *The principles and Practices of Good Governance*, Institute for Development, Policy and Management, University of Manchester, British Council, 1997
10. UNDP (1997), Good governance characters: Re-conceptualizing Governance, UNDP, presented as *Issue Paper on Urban Governance: Global Vision and Local Needs - Assessment, Analysis & Action By City Governments*, SCAP, accessed at http://www.unescap.org/huset/hangzhou/paper/governance_paper.htm on 14 April 2007.
11. World Bank (2003) *Indicators by World Bank Research Called 'Best Measure' of Quality of Governance*, Press Release 9 July 2003, Washington.