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## **CITIZEN-CENTRIC ADMINISTRATION: CONCEPT AND APPROACH**

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Citizens' wellbeing is the primary objective of governance. Inappropriate actions or policies may prove counter-productive for the effective governance. The traditional public administration tactics based on 'efficiency and economy' became ineffective to achieve objectives of the emerging public policies. "The classical public administration model emphasized upon division of work, specialization, rule-orientation, impersonality and impartiality in public services".

The customary system of public administration, however, resulted in enlarged but inefficient bureaucracy, increased administrative expenditure and wide gap between citizens and the administration. The emergence of 'new public administration' during 1970s focused more on community and societal issues than traditional concerns. The new Citizen-Centric Administration was based more on social equality. The 'new public administration' resulted in significant changes in administrative system managing the public institutions came to be known as the 'new public management'. This model provided basis to Citizen-Centric Governance and aimed at bringing consumerist role of public institutions along with market-based administration. It was also seen as a giant leap towards Good Governance. The expanse and complexities in governance and aspirations of the citizens have changed manifold. Various attempts have been made to rectify the existing rules and procedures but to no avail. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Information Technology in its 22nd Report observed that "the age-old statutes and regulations governing the manual process will not be suitable for governing the electronic processes which require altogether a different set of legal framework and guidelines to make thee-governance successful". It was opined that the legal and regulatory changes would help remove hurdles of the manual

regulatory mechanisms - a step towards Citizen-Centric Administration. The committee recommended that "review of all relevant statutes and regulations should urgently be done to bring about suitable changes therein so as to make them compatible with the cyber age technology enabling the citizens to obtain maximum advantage of e-Governance projects". The mention of the welfare of citizens in the Constitution of India in itself lays foundation for Citizen-Centric Governance.-As-enshrined in the Constitution "India has developed an elaborate legal and institutional framework for ensuring Good Governance to its citizens". Citizens are the major stakeholders in Good Governance models. Hence, they need to know everything stailing from planning to the outcome. The Right to Information Act, \_2005, as a statute, is playing a big role in this model. Citizen-Centric Good Governance model has introduced ' actual' democracy at the grass-root level. It has also plugged the leakages in the implementation

Secretariat (2015), Twenty Second Report, Submitted by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on information Technology, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Sixteenth Lok Sabha, Government of India: New Delhi Second Administrative Reforms Commission , Of schemes which in turn has reduced the possibility of discontent among citizenry thus promoting peace and harmony. Such initiatives also lead to sustainable development. Special efforts have been made by formulating citizen charters implement of the RTI act of 2005 and the right to services act of 2011. These initiatives are seen as key instruments of citizen-centric administration, which can go a long way in using the model of good governance.

Good Governance is an efficient, realistic, rightful and Citizen-Centric Administration in a citizen-friendly manner. Free from the administrative hindrances, Good Governance presents civic view of the existing miss governance in many developing countries. The idea of Good Governance has turned out to be significant for the persisting problems in the political system. Good Governance seeks elected governments to change the pattern of their practice and an upgraded bureaucracy while keeping citizens at the center. It aims to bridge the gap by means of being reliable, transparent and accountable forwards delivery of the public services. Promoting a welfare state, Good Governance should have simplified

procedures and less hierarchy. Simplifying it, B. K. Gokhale writes that, "the welfare state is one which is wedded to the principle of promoting the general happiness and welfare of the people. It regards itself more as an agency of social services than as an instrument of power. It draws up all types of plans according to its resources, the genius of the people and the ability and integrity of the administrators".

Good Governance has turned even the in-fructuous development and welfare programmes fructuous. No strategy, practice or standard guarantees goodness in governance unless particular institution and the people running it regard it as a piece of their obligation and as a duty to serve the people.

Citizens constitute the centrality of a Citizen-Centric government. Giving priority to the citizens build their sense of belongingness in the system. Since earlier times the citizens have been trained not to question the government, however now - to legitimize itself as citizen-friendly atmosphere, governments have started to signify a 'Citizen-Centric Governance'; thus giving citizens chance as a right to challenge and question. This has led to citizens' feeling 'being considered' by the government. Thus, a Citizen-Centric approach focuses towards the overall well being of citizens. Suppression of individual rights in pre-modern world monarch regimes inspired people to bring a political system that could bring the focus of the governance to citizens.

'Minimum Government - Maximum Governance' is today's motto of most of the states. The governments have been making service delivery processes as simpler as possible for the benefit of their citizens. The idea is to disconnect them from facing 'babu-shahi' and providing them with a hassle-free single window system for delivery of public services. There are instances where citizens have reported availability of easy, simplified, less time consuming and non-corrupt system of delivery of public services. The emergence of new Information and Communications Technology (ICT) platforms has ensured effective and uninterrupted governance at many stages.

The idea of more governance helps in simplifying procedures by reducing the redundant links (removal of lengthy forms and unnecessary processes, abolishment of affidavits and

bringing in self-attestation), various platforms for delivery of services (digital platform for instance), creating a robust public redressal system (to have departments like Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances) and enhancing the ease of doing business to help drive the economy (Make in India and Startup India for instance). The pre-requisites of a Citizen-Centric Government are to have sound legal frameworks, robust institutional mechanism to ensure that the rule of Law is maintained, competent and motivated personnel to run the system, and decentralization, delegation and accountability.

The centrality of the concept of Citizen-Centric Governance is defined by providing Good Governance to its citizens. Good Governance assures efficient functioning by the respective office of public service and also makes them accountable. Besides this, it also aims to adopt a zero tolerance strategy, making institutions responsive, decentralized and transparent; simplified procedures, periodic assessment and time to time reforms among others. The constituents of citizens-friendly governance notably are—"re-engineered and simplified processes, digitization of the government departments, citizens' charters independent evaluation of services, grievance redressal mechanisms and active citizens' participation-public-private partnership". The 'modern concept of Good Governance' also finds its roots in Kautilya's 'Arthashastra', which states - "in the happiness of his subjects lies his happiness, in their welfare his welfare, whatever pleases himself, he does not consider as good, but whatever pleases his subject, he considers as good". Good Governance provides an equal opportunity for all its citizens, irrespective of caste, gender, race and class. Providing services to its citizens in an effective and efficient manner is a prime goal of the government. Such a government desires to provide equitable response to its subjects and thus pave basis for Good Governance. Good Governance relies on the essentials such as: "Ethos (of service to the citizen)"; "Ethics (honesty, integrity and transparency)"; "Equity (treating all citizens alike with empathy for the weaker sections)", and, "Efficiency (speedy and effective delivery of service without harassment and using ICT increasingly)". Thus, Citizen-Centric Good Governance has citizen at the core."The 11th five year plan of 2007-2012 has emphasized that Good Governance should cover distinct dimensions". The central element of Good Governance is to give equal rights to all the citizens to elect government of

their choice at every level, irrespective of which section they belong to. This is also a constitutionally protected right that moves from the lowest Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) to the highest election of Members of Parliament (MP) by the citizens. This, despite the fact that, the government and bureaucracy exist to facilitate the citizens in the rightful pursuit of their legal activities. Rigidities of the system over centralization of powers, highly hierarchical and top down method of functioning with a large number of intermediary levels delaying finalization of any decision, divorce of authority from accountability and the tendency towards micromanagement, have led to a structure in which form is more important than substance and procedures are valued over end results and outcomes. Non-performance of the administrative structures, poor service quality and lack of responsiveness and the subjective and negative abuse of authority has eroded trust in governance systems which needs to be restored urgently". One has to understand a fact that people will always have complaints against the government. The governments cannot make tailor made policy for each individual but a wider understanding and inclusion is considered by the state while forming any policy. Even under these circumstances, what best a government can offer to the citizens is transparency in delivery of service. The general impression of people towards the bureaucracy is poor. A government official is normally seen as 'jawaai' of the government who comes late and leaves office early, and unaccountable. Their service is safe under Article 311 of the constitution and they are the biggest beneficiaries of the system themselves<sup>189</sup>.

The idea of 'insensitive government' can be attributed to a handful of government servants and the institutional framework available to them. However, there is a need to rethink whether the present institutional framework will be adequate after some years; whether skills and capacities of the public servants are relevant in the available scenario; means to eradicate the citizen's perception and address their concerns; required institutional reforms etc. The major impediments in the path of Good Governance can be summed up as the excessively centralized public service delivery system. Mismatch between the demand driven and supply oriented services, non-compliance of rules and regulations stated in law by the citizens, and lack of awareness about rights and duties are among the other obstacles.

Citizens are central to any governance reforms. The primary elements or the essential pre-conditions for the so-called Good Governance are using available state of the art IT tools, bringing transparency in the bureaucratic system and giving citizens. Right to information these make the government accountable and citizens empowered; demand and receive the information about public policies and programmers. Citizen-Centric Good Governance strengthens the democracy as it allows citizens' participation at various levels. Monitoring and evaluation of the government functions can also be attributed to have made the concept of Good Governance successful. Besides this, availability of the cost-effective internal grievance redressed mechanism in the public agencies is to be developed than the costly judicial interventions, for instance.

Simplification of application forms and procedures, single window approach, time to time information update etc. also contribute to administrative reforms Most importantly, all these reforms and the new structures thus adopted are required to be made accustomed to the e-Governance supported by legal, institutional and procedural changes. The conditions of non-functional provisions result due to the non-rigorous enforcement on ground by certain departments. Such attitude of the departments, especially by the Police, is to be curtailed and a zero tolerance strategy should be adopted, particularly for traffic violations, pollution control laws and offences etc. Many a times, the citizens themselves, do not follow the rules. Compliance of laws by both, government and the citizens will only lead to maintenance of public order and create appropriate statistical database. The proper application of the rule of law makes institutions vibrant, responsive and accountable which further adds to the government's commitment to Good Governance the prerequisites being active citizens' participation, administrative and governance reforms, ethical government, periodic assessments and evaluations of the quality of governance.

Citizen-Centric governance allows people to contribute in the decision-making process. The governance encompasses the means and methods, processes and institutional establishments through which consensual decisions are reached and implemented. Citizen participation instantly shifts position of a citizen as the recipient of development to active participant in the development process<sup>199</sup>. Citizens' participation in governance

demonstrates a healthy democracy as it is more participative as well as competitive<sup>200</sup>. This engagement represents different degrees or intensity of participation. A truly intense participation engages citizens more actively in planning and implementation and as members in budgeting and monitoring committees. The Second Administrative Reforms Commission was of the view that "mechanisms for citizens' participation in governance could be conceptualized in five main forms:

1. Citizens seeking information;
2. Citizens giving suggestions;
3. Citizens demanding better services;
4. Citizens holding service providers and other government agencies' accountable; and
5. Active citizens' participation in administration/decision making".

Adopting process of Good Governance is a huge step which requires pumping lot of resources - both human and technological. It also requires a huge sum of money to initiate any such project. In this scenario, the most important factor becomes an aware and participative citizenry. Many a times we hear that the people do not participate in reform initiatives due to the prejudice of 'mai-baap' approach and discomfort with the government atmosphere and procedure. Encouraging its citizens to participate is a major challenge encouraged for participation at all levels of governance. Citizens must be sensitized that it is their own government and require their review to make governance more effective. There are other perspectives by which citizens' participation may be encouraged, for instance: by enabling women's participation, decentralization and delegation of powers and functions, having a grievance redressal mechanism, other appropriate special institutional mechanisms, and process simplification.

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