

Frame-work of Governance in India

India is admittedly an ancient society but a new state. The state in India was born on 15th August 1947 when the country got its political independence from the British colonial rule through in the process it got partitioned. An immediate task of the new political leadership was to give to the people a durable framework of governance and thus to frame a national constitution. Indian independence in 1947 was the natural culmination of the nationalist movement, which may be said to have begun in the year 1885, the year of the founding of the Indian National Congress. The long freedom movement gave the nationalist leadership enough time to compose its dreams. As a mobilisational device the leadership was called upon to give shape and coherence to them. In the constitution of India, they find mention in the preamble, the fundamental rights, and the directive principles of state policy. The Constituent Assembly of India, elected under the preceding Government of India Act, 1935, took two and a half years to draft the constitution which came into operation in 1950 and which is still in operation. The constitution of India, which is the oldest functioning constitution in the Third World, declares India to be a sovereign, democratic republic committed to justice, liberty, equality and fraternity among people. In 1975 two more ideals were added under which India is put under the solemn constitutional obligation to promote secularism and socialism in the people.

Under the long colonial rule India was put on the path of parliamentary democracy of the British Westminster pattern and thus had acquired some experience of the parliamentary democracy and its working. Independent India therefore opted for parliamentary form of government without much discussion. As is the rule of the game of this form of democracy, parliament, which is subject to the sovereignty of the constitution, is the font of executive power, holding the executive accountable to it. The parliamentary form of democracy has been adopted and thus operates at the lower state level of governance also. Parliamentary democracy of the Westminster type is thus the most prominent attribute of the constitutional frame-work of the country.

Federalism is another key feature of the constitution. Though the constitution calls India a union of states. The country is a federation, fulfilling as it does all the classic tests of this form of government. India presently consists of 28 states and seven union territories. Of these two key features, parliamentarism is more deeply rooted in India and federalism is a weaker vessel of the Indian fleet. In India, the Government of India is the Government of India, but also Government of the governments in India. The evidence of such a hegemonic role of the Government of India is scattered all over the constitution. But only one instance would be sufficient to prove this point. Article 356 of the constitution empowers the Government of India to proclaim a president's rule in a state and thus take over its administration under its direct rule. Even in normal times, when the federal system remains in operation the country's public administration is integrated.

India is a federation but with a distinction. Federations are two-tier governing arrangements but India has created a third stratum of governance since 1992 when the country enacted the seventy-third and seventy-fourth amendments of the constitution. Since then, local government in India –both rural and urban – has been enshrined in the constitution itself. It is a bold measure of empowerment of local government but its true impact on the political system is yet too early to assess. This may be seen as a part of the partnerships government is anxious to forge with the larger society. This may be cited as the third feature of the frame-work of governance.

Fourthly, irrespective of levels or political complexion, the government in the country is firmly committed to the directive principles of state policy in the constitution, which direct it to actively work for the economic cultural and social well being of the people. This calls for a philosophical change in the role and place of government in the Indian society. Of course, the directive principles of state policy are so broadly phrased with no weightage allocated that the rulers have enough to pick and choose – and in the process may overlook them if they so choose. The constitution in its directive principles ordains that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good, and further that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment. This directive led the state in India following independence to set up over 250 public undertakings in a bid to control the commanding heights of the national economy. The pendulum has swung since the nineties of the twentieth century and India is now turning more and more to economic liberalization and free market. The directive principles have not in the least hindered these shifts in policy.

Finally, the administration of the land is to be conducted within the frame-work of rule of law, constitutionalism, judicial review, limited government, respect for human rights transparency etc. To protect citizens' legitimate interest, institutions like the Supreme Court, National Human Rights Commission, Consumer's Courts, National the Supreme Court, National Human Rights Commission, Consumer's Courts, National Commission for Women, National Minorities Commission etc have been established. The constitution of India establishes an independent judiciary headed by the Supreme Court of India, whose decisions are binding on all in the land. The Supreme Court of India enjoys the broad powers of judicial review and has over the years expanded its influence by a liberal interpretation of its powers, also called 'judicial activism'. Although India is a federation its judiciary is an integrated one.

The President of India is the head of state elected for a term of five years. He can be re-elected also and the constitution does not prescribe any maximum limit to his re-election. He is elected by a complex procedure of an electoral college composed of all elected members of the legislative assemblies in the states and of Parliament. The device of the Electoral College is designed to insure uniformity among the states as well as parity between the states as a whole and Union. The President is a symbol of the nation and is ordinarily a titular head. He invites the leader of the majority party in the Lok Sabha to form the Government under his prime ministership and on his advice appoints

other ministers. But his discretionary role becomes crucial when no political party wins a clear majority in the election or when the party has not yet elected its leader. The President's decision is final and cannot be questioned in a court of law. Since the nineties the President's role in ministry making has assumed importance as no single political party has commanded a clear majority in the Lok Sabha. In short, an existence of a multiplicity of parties which characterizes the contemporary political scenario calls for a President who reads the constitution very carefully and acts judiciously. The constitution does not prescribe the maximum size of the council of ministers and as such the size is increasing over a period of time. The work of the government has, of course, increased considerably; but the size of the ministry is also determined by representational compulsions in a large and diverse nation, by political expediency and consideration of patronage.

The council of ministers with the prime minister at its head is the real executive which is accountable to the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the parliament. Until the mid-1970s, the constitutional nature of the office of the president was left to be governed by conventions, but an amendment made in the seventies makes such a relationship explicit: 'There shall be a council ministers with the prime minister at the head to aid and advice the president who shall, in the exercise of his functions, act in accordance with such advice'. The council of ministers is firmly bound by the principle of joint responsibility and includes cabinet ministers, ministers of state, and deputy ministers. A cabinet minister is normally the political head of the ministry assigned to him, but in theory, at least, his responsibilities extend to the entire field of central administration. A minister of state as said earlier may either be made head of a ministry or, as is generally done, be attached to an individual cabinet minister, but he is not a member of the cabinet and attends its meetings only on invitation. A deputy minister never holds an independent charge of a ministry, restricting himself to such functions as are entrusted to him by the minister concerned.

In parliamentary democracy, the effective power vests with the prime minister and the cabinet, which consists solely of ministers of the first (or cabinet) rank. It meets regularly under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister to decide national policies and matters of concern to more than one ministry. The real effectiveness of the cabinet in relation to the prime minister depends on factors like the prime minister's own personality and stature, the political clout of other members, the uniparty or biparty character of the ministry, etc. To relieve the cabinet of some of its preliminary work, cabinet committees are set up. Many cabinet committees are of a standing nature, of which the Political Affairs Committee and the Appointments Committee are the most powerful. Generally, the prime minister presides over a cabinet committee, which includes the senior ministers nominated by him.

These ministers of different ranks possess at least one qualification in common: they must be members of Parliament, most of them coming from its lower house. According to the established practice in the mature democracies, the Prime Minister and his senior colleagues like the finance minister normally come from the Lok Sabha – a house which represents the people of the country though exceptions have existed. The upper house, known as the Rajya Sabha, is indirectly elected, its term fixed at six years

and it is not subject to dissolution. The term of the members of the upper house is staggered as in the United States Senate so that one-third of the members of the upper house is staggered as in the United States Senate so that one-third of the members stand for election every two years. Of the two houses, the lower one the Lok Sabha, directly elected for five years is more powerful. In financial matters the upper house is hardly a body that counts. Money bills can be introduced only in the Lok Sabha. The government of the day survives so long as it retains the confidence of the lower chamber. Bills other than money bills can be introduced in either house and require to be passed by both the houses. The differences between the bill as passed by both the houses are resolved by informal process of give and take or through the formal provision of a joint sitting of parliament. The numerical superiority of the Lok Sabha ensures the disputed bill's passage to its favour in the joint sitting. The bill is then sent to the President for his assent. The President may return the bill to Parliament for reconsideration. But he enjoys a limited veto. The President cannot withhold his assent to the bill if it is passed again. Legislative bills can be introduced for enactment by private members but the legislative leadership has definitely shifted into the hands of the executive over a period of time.

As already mentioned India is a constitutional democracy in which the President is the head of state and thus all executive powers are vested in him. Being a parliamentary democracy the President exercises his executive powers in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister aided by other ministers. Under Article 77 of the constitution, the President allocates the business of the Government of India, which has paved the way for the creation of ministers and departments in the Government. In the year 2000 the Government of India comprises 39 ministries split into 80 departments. One must note a distinction between a ministry and a department: a ministry is a minister's charge while a department is headed by a career secretary and constitutes his administrative charge. Being political, a ministry is a flexible unit while a department, being administrative in nature, is a more stable arrangement. A ministry may comprise one department but may have two, three or even four departments, the general principle being the clubbing together of departments which are inter-related.

Ministries and Departments in the Government of India

- Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare
 - ☒ Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE)
 - ☒ Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare
- Ministry of AYUSH
- Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers
 - ☒ Department of Chemicals and Petrochemicals
 - ☒ Department of Fertilizers
 - ☒ Department of Pharmaceuticals
- Ministry of Civil Aviation

- Ministry of Coal
- Ministry of Commerce and Industry
 - + Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade
 - + Department of Commerce
- Ministry of Communications
 - + Department of Posts
 - + Department of Telecommunications (DOT)
- Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
 - + Department of Consumer Affairs
 - + Department of Food and Public Distribution
- Ministry of Corporate Affairs
- Ministry of Culture
- Ministry of Defence
 - + Department of Defence
 - + Department of Defence Production
 - + Department of Defence Research & Development
 - + Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare
- Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region
- Ministry of Earth Sciences
 - + India Meteorological Department (IMD)
- Ministry of Education
 - + Department of Higher Education
 - + Department of School Education and Literacy
- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
- Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
- Ministry of External Affairs
- Ministry of Finance
 - + Department of Economic Affairs
 - + Department of Expenditure
 - + Department of Financial Services
 - + Department of Investment and Public Asset Management
 - + Department of Revenue
- Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying
 - + Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying

- + Department of Fisheries
- Ministry of Food Processing Industries
- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- + Department of Health and Family Welfare
- + Department of Health Research, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
- Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises
- + Department of Heavy Industry
- + Department of Public Enterprises
- Ministry of Home Affairs
- + Central Armed Police Forces
- + Central Police Organisation
- + Department of Border Management
- + Department of Home
- + Department of Internal Security
- + Department of Jammu & Kashmir (J & K) Affairs
- + Department of Official Language
- + Department of States
- Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
- Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
- Ministry of Jal Shakti
- + Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation
- + Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation
- Ministry of Labour and Employment
- Ministry of Law and Justice
- + Department of Justice
- + Department of Legal Affairs
- + Legislative Department
- Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
- Ministry of Mines
- Ministry of Minority Affairs
- Ministry of New and Renewable Energy
- Ministry of Panchayati Raj
- Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs
- Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions

- ☒ Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG)
- ☒ Department of Pension & Pensioner's Welfare
- ☒ Department of Personnel and Training
- Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas
- Ministry of Power
- Ministry of Railways
- Ministry of Road Transport and Highways
- Ministry of Rural Development
- ☒ Department of Land Resources (DLR)
- ☒ Department of Rural Development (DRD)
- Ministry of Science and Technology
- ☒ Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India
- ☒ Department of Science and Technology (DST)
- ☒ Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR)
- Ministry of Shipping
- Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
- Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
- ☒ Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities
- ☒ Department of Social Justice and Empowerment
- Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
- Ministry of Steel
- Ministry of Textiles
- Ministry of Tourism
- Ministry of Tribal Affairs
- Ministry of Women and Child Development
- Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
- ☒ Department of Sports
- ☒ Department of Youth Affairs
- Department of Atomic Energy
- Department of Space

While sketching the contemporary governmental set-up it must be kept in mind the current fluidity in the larger economic system in India. A talk on 'Insurance' being privatized is going on for some time and this sector of the economy may see a shift in ownership and control. But the institutional arrangements for insurance of the earlier period still continues. The Ministry of Communications with its four departments still continue though the Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited has been set up. Similarly, the

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting is likely to witness large-scale change with the ushering in of Prashar Bharati.

The machinery of government has at its top the political executive which is already discussed in the foregoing. Below the political executive sprawls the administrative machinery, which is a three-tiered arrangement in the Government of India. Indian administration is based on the doctrine of policy-administration separateness and as such immediately below the political executive comes the policy-making organ, called the secretariat. This term refers to the complex of ministries and departments in the Government of India the defining characteristics being their location immediately below the minister, the latter being the political head, the administrative head being the career civil servant, the secretary, his full designation being 'secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of'. The secretariat is the extended personality of the minister engaged in policy-making and related activities like drafting of necessary legislation to be placed before parliament for enactment, preparation of the ministry's budget etc. The secretary is assisted by a complement of officers of the rank of additional secretaries, joint secretaries, directors, deputy secretaries, under secretaries and other clerical personnel, the exact number being fixed according the perception of administrative requirements.

Below this policy-making organ of government come executive agencies, variously organized to suit the requirements of the specific situation. The functions of a modern state are vast and varied, necessitating designing of new forms of organisation for them. The expansion of public enterprises led to the setting up of the company and corporation forms of organization. To handle activities involving research, training and dissemination of information, registered societies under the Societies Registration Act have been established. In short, the executive agencies in the Government of India have been principally organized in the following six forms.

1. Attached Office (e.g., Central Public Works Department)
2. Subordinate Office (e.g., Sardar Patel National Policy Academy)
3. Departmental Undertakings (e.g., ordnance factories)
4. A company under the Companies Act (e.g., Hindustan Steel Ltd.)
5. A corporation (e.g., Damodar Valley Corporation)
6. A Society under the Societies Registration Act (e.g., Indian Institute of Foreign Trade)

But the common forms of organization of the executive agencies are the Attached Office and the Subordinate Office. An Attached Office is the repository of technical knowledge and information. Because policy-making must necessarily be based on technical knowledge, the Attached Office makes available to the policy-making secretariat the necessary input. Its second function is to issue executive directions to the lowest tier of administration which is charged with the responsibility of detailed implementation of policies and programmes finalized at the higher levels. The subordinate office which is the lowest tier functions as a field establishment or as agency responsible for the detailed execution of the policies of government. In 1998 the Government of India had 118 attached offices. Ordinarily, a subordinate office operates

under the executive control of the attached office but this is not always the case. A subordinate office may function directly under the secretariat. One must equally note that some ministries have no attached and subordinate offices under them.

The higher positions in the secretariat are generally manned by members of the all-India services (India Administrative Services, Indian Police Service, and India Forest Service) particularly by the Indian Administrative Service, India's elite service though legally no post is reserved for any particular service. Members of the IAS decline in number as one goes down the hierarchy: personnel from other services too main the positions below the top although many from such services are also getting appointed as secretaries. Members of the technical services are mostly found in the attached offices and subordinate offices of the Government of India.

Cabinet Secretariat

Origin

Before the adoption of the portfolio system in the Government of India, all governmental business was disposed of by the Governor-General-in Council, the Council functioning as a joint consultative board. As the amount and complexity of business of the Government increased, the work of the various departments was distributed amongst the members of the Council only the more important cases being dealt with by the Governor-General or the Council collectively.

This procedure was legalised by the Councils Act of 1861 during the time of Lord Canning, leading to the introduction of the portfolio system and the inception of the Executive Council of the Governor-General. The Secretariat of the Executive Council was headed by the Private Secretary to the Viceroy, but he did not attend the Council meetings. Lord Willingdon first started the practice of having his Private Secretary by his side at these meetings. Later, this practice continued and in November, 1935, the Viceroy's Private Secretary was given the additional designation of Secretary to the Executive Council.

The constitution of the Interim Government in September 1946 brought a change in the name, though little in functions, of this Office. The Executive Council's Secretariat was then designated as Cabinet Secretariat. It seems, however, at least in retrospect, that Independence brought a sort of change in the functions of the Cabinet Secretariat. It no longer remained concerned with only the passive work of circulating papers to Ministers and Ministries but developed into an organisation for effecting coordination between the Ministries.

Development

After independence, in 1949 an Economic Committee of the Cabinet was set up with its Secretariat at Ministry of Finance. In 1950 this was transferred to Cabinet Secretariat and designated as Economic Wing and ultimately merged with the Secretariat in 1955. In 1954, the Organisation and Methods Division was established under the Cabinet Secretariat which was later transferred to Ministry of Home Affairs during 1964.

In 1957, the Defence Committee of the Cabinet was constituted under Cabinet Secretariat for which officers were drawn from the Defence services. This wing was transferred during 1991 to the Ministry of Defence. Department of Statistics was created in 1961 under Cabinet Secretariat which was transferred to Ministry of Planning in Feb. 1973. Department of Special Economic Coordination was set up under Cabinet Secretariat in 1962 and later transferred to Ministry of Economic Defence Coordination and at present the Department is not existing. The Intelligence Wing was set up to provide secretarial assistance to the Joint Intelligence Committee in 1965.

The Bureau of Public Enterprises was brought under the Cabinet Secretariat for short duration from Jan. 1966 to June, 1966 and later transferred to Deptt. of Economic Affairs under Ministry of Finance and later during 1985 to the Deptt. of Public Enterprises under Ministry of Industry.

In June, 1970 three departments namely:

- 1) Department of Electronics
- 2) Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and
- 3) Department of Personnel

were created under Cabinet Secretariat and in July, 1970 Directorate General of Revenue Intelligence-cum-Directorate of Enforcement was set up under Deptt. of Cabinet Affairs under Cabinet Secretariat and later this directorate was shifted to Department of Personnel in August, 1970.

Department of Scientific and Industrial Research became independent department in May, 1971.

The Department of Electronics became independent department in 1971 and the Department of Personnel became independent. Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms was transferred to the Ministry of Home Affairs from the Cabinet Secretariat. At present it is a part of Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pension with a bifurcation as Department of Personnel and training and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances.

Department of Ocean Development was created in July 1981 under Cabinet Secretariat and became independent department in Feb. 1982. The Directorate of Public Grievances was set up in the Cabinet Secretariat in March, 1988. This Directorate entertains grievances from the public.

National Authority, Chemical Weapons Convention (Na,Cwc)

National Authority, Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) was set up by a resolution of Cabinet Secretariat dated 5th May 1997 to fulfill the obligations enunciated in the Chemical Weapons Convention initially signed by 130 countries in a conference which concluded on 14th January 1993 for the purpose prohibiting of the development, production, execution, transfer, use and stockpiling of all chemical weapons by Member-States is a non-discriminatory process. To fulfill its obligations, each State Party has to designate or establish a National Authority to serve as the national focal point for effective liaison with Organization for Prohibition of the Chemical Weapons and other State Parties and hence the NA, CWC under the administrative control of the Cabinet Secretariat was set up.

The National Authority is headed by the Chairperson who is in the rank of Additional Secretary to the Government of India and is supported by a suitable Technical Secretariat to look after the various functions. A High Level Steering Committee under the Chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary with Secretary (Chemical and Petrochemicals), Foreign Secretary, Secretary, Defence Research & Development, Defence Secretary and Chairman, National Authority as its other members would oversee the functions of the National Authority. The National Authority, CWC is responsible for implementation of CWC Act, liaison with CWC and other State parties, Collection of data fulfilling of declaration obligations, negotiating facility agreements, coordinating OPCW inspections, providing appropriate facilities for training national inspectors and industry personnel, ensuring protection of confidential business information, checking declarations for consistency, accuracy and completeness, registration of entities engaged in activities related to CWC etc.

Functions

The Cabinet Secretariat is under the direct charge of the Prime Minister. The administrative head of the Secretariat is the Cabinet Secretary who is also the ex-officio Chairman of the Civil Services Board.

In the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961 "Cabinet Secretariat" finds a place in the First Schedule to the Rules. The subjects allotted to this Secretariat are:-

1. Secretarial assistance to Cabinet and Cabinet Committees.
2. Rules of Business.

The Cabinet Secretariat is responsible for the administration of the Government of India (Transaction of Business) Rules, 1961 and the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules 1961, facilitating smooth transaction of business in Ministries/Departments of the Government by ensuring adherence to these rules. The Secretariat assists in decision-making in Government by ensuring Inter-Ministerial coordination, ironing out differences amongst Ministries/Departments and evolving consensus through the instrumentality of the standing/adhoc Committees of Secretaries. Through this mechanism new policy initiatives are also promoted.

The Cabinet Secretariat ensures that the President, the Vice President and Ministers are kept informed of the major activities of all Ministries/Departments by means of monthly summary of their activities. Management of major crisis situations in the country and coordinating activities of various Ministries in such a situation is also one of the functions of the Cabinet Secretariat.

Support to Cabinet Committees

The secretarial assistance provided by Cabinet Secretariat to the Cabinet and Cabinet committees, includes

1. Convening of the meetings of the Cabinet on the orders of the Prime Minister.
2. Preparation and circulation of the agenda.
3. Circulating papers related to the cases on the agenda.
4. Preparing a record of discussions taken.
5. Circulation of the record after obtaining the approval of the Prime Minister.
6. Watching implementation of the decisions taken by the Cabinet.

The Cabinet Secretariat is the custodian of the papers of the Cabinet meetings.

Promotion of Inter-Ministerial Coordination

Among the inter-Ministerial matters, the coordination is required for:

- (i) removing difficulties;
- (ii) removing differences;
- (iii) overcoming delays;
- (iv) coordination in administrative action
- (v) coordination of policies.

While each Ministry is responsible for acting on its own for expeditious implementation of Government policies, plans and programmes, where inter-Ministerial cooperation is involved, they often seek the assistance of the Cabinet Secretariat. The inter-Ministerial problems are dealt with in the meetings of the Committees of Secretaries (COS). Committees are constituted for discussing specific matters and proposals emanating from various Secretaries to the Government and meetings are held under the chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary. These committees have been able to break bottlenecks or secure mutually supporting inter-Ministerial action.

The discussions of the COS takes place on the basis of a paper formulated by the principal Department concerned and the Department with a different point of view, if any, providing a supplementary note. The decisions or recommendations of the COS are unanimous. These proceedings are also circulated to and are followed up by the departments. There are other important functions which it discharges, viz.,

1. Monitoring
2. Coordination
3. Promoting new policy initiatives

The Cabinet Secretariat is seen as a useful mechanism by the departments for promoting inter-Ministerial coordination since the Cabinet Secretary is also the head of the civil services. The Secretaries felt it necessary to keep the Cabinet Secretary informed of developments from time to time. The Transaction of Business Rules also require them to keep the Cabinet Secretary informed of developments from time to time, specially if there are any departures from these rules.

The Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules

In exercise of the powers conferred by clause (3) of article 77 of the Constitution and in super session of all previous rules and orders on the subject the President hereby makes the following rules for the allocation of the business of the Government of India.

1. 1. Short Title - These rules may be called the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961.
2. 2. Allocation of Business - The business of the Government of India shall be transacted in the Ministries, Departments, Secretariats and Offices specified in the First Schedule to these rules (all which are hereinafter referred to as "departments").
3. 3. Distribution of Subjects –
 - (1) The distribution of subjects among the departments shall be as specified in the Second Schedule to these rules and shall include all attached and subordinate offices or other organisations including Public Sector Undertakings concerned with its subjects and sub-rules (2), (3) and (4) of this rule.
 - (2) The compiling of the accounts of each Department shall stand allocated to that Department with effect from the date from which the President relieves, by order made under the first proviso to sub-section (1) of Section 10 of the Comptroller and Auditor General's (Duties, Powers and Conditions of Service) Act, 1971; the Comptroller and Auditor General from the responsibility for compiling the accounts of that Department.
 - (3) Where sanction for the prosecution of any person for any offence is required to be accorded-
 - a) If he is a Government servant, by the Department which is the Cadre Controlling authority for the service of which he is a member, and in any other case, by the Department in which he was working at the time of commission of the alleged offence;
 - b) If he is a public servant other than a Government servant, appointed by the Central Government, by the Department administratively concerned with the organisation in which he was working at the time of commission of the alleged offence; and
 - c) In any other case, by the Department which administers the Act under which the alleged offence is committed;

Provided that where, for offences alleged to have been committed, sanction is required under more than one Act, it shall be competent for the Department which administers any of such Acts to accord sanction under all such Acts.

- (4) (4) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-rule (3), the President may, by general or special order, direct that in any case or class of cases the sanction shall be by the Department of Personnel and Training.

4. Allocation of Departments among Ministers –

- (1) The business of the Government of India allocated to Cabinet Secretariat is and, shall always be deemed to have been, allotted to the Prime Minister. (\$)
- (2) Subject to the provisions of sub-rule (1), the President may, on the advice of the Prime Minister, allocate the business of the Government of India among Ministers by assigning one or more departments to the charge of a Minister.
- (3) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-rule(1) or sub-rule(2), the President may, on the advice of the Prime Minister -
 - (a) associate in relation to the business allotted to a Minister under either of the said sub-rules, another Minister or Deputy Minister to perform such functions as may be assigned to him; or
 - (b) Entrust the responsibility for specified items of business affecting any one or more than one Department to a Minister who is in charge of any other Department or to a Minister without Portfolio who is not in charge of any Department.

Directorate of Public Grievances

The Directorate of Public Grievances (DPG) in the Cabinet Secretariat of Government of India helps to obtain responses to unresolved grievances on matters relating to some Central Government Departments and Organisations. DPG can help to obtain a response and resolution on these grievances from the department or organisation.

Split system

Secretariat system in India is based on the principle of separation of policy making function from that of policy execution. Under the scheme of separation i.e. split system the secretariat should be concerned only with policy making and should not indulge itself in policy execution. Policy execution should be left to executive agencies which are located outside the secretariat organisation.

Tenure system

Under tenure system of staffing, every official will be deputed to the Central Secretariat and has to work there for a fixed period and should return back to his parent cadre after the expiry of time limit. It was introduced in India in 1905 by Lord Curzon because he believed that India may be governed from Shimla or Calcutta but is administered from the plains.

The period of tenure for under secretary is 3 years, Deputy Secretary for 4 years, Joint secretary for 4 years Secretary is 5 years.

PRMIE MINISTER OFFICE (PMO)

Prime Minister as the head of Government plays a crucial role in the political, administrative system of the country. To fulfill his responsibilities he is assisted by PMO. PMO is a staff agency meant for providing secretarial assistance and crucial advice to the PM. It is an extra constitutional body and enjoys the status of a department of Government of India under the allocation of business rules 1961. PMO came into existence in 1947 by replacing the secretary to the Governor General (Personal). PMO is headed by PM and administratively by the Principal Secretary. Additionally it consists of one or two additional secretaries, 3-5 joint secretaries and number of directors, deputy secretaries/ under secretaries.

Function of PMO

1. It deals with all government files.
2. Puts before the PM all important documents for orders and instructions.
3. Looks after the affairs of different Ministries and Departments which are headed by PM.
4. Tenders advice to the PM on various foreign and domestic matters.
5. Helps the PM in respect of his responsibilities as chairman of Planning commission and NDC.
6. Looks after the public relations of the PM like and press.
7. Acts as a think tank of PM.

Role of PMO vis-a-vis Cabinet Secretariat

Immediately after independence Jawaharlal Nehru assumed the office of Prime Minister and PMO at that point of time was a small organization attached to the PM. It was headed by H.M. Patel, a distinguished member of ICS who was also a joint secretary of the Viceroy executive council, functioned as a de facto Cabinet Secretariat. He was also appointed as the principal private secretary to Nehru.

In democracy, Cabinet is the apex body and Cabinet Secretariat is the apex administrative unit. In terms of working there is no rivalry between Cabinet Secretariat and PMO. Jawaharlal Nehru was a democrat and had a great regard for constitutional authorities. Cabinet secretary was given primary importance and PMO was a small personal office of the PM performing mostly administrative functions and the importance of cabinet secretary was in no way affected because of PMO. Nehru also downgraded the post of his principal private secretary to the level of joint secretary, thereby ensuring clear authority and precedence to the cabinet secretary.

Lal Bahadur Shastri succeeded Nehru and strengthened the PMO and made it a powerful organ of the government. The same trend was continued by Indira Gandhi also. L.K.Jha was the principal secretary to the PM during the tenure of Lal Bahadur Shastri was also the head of PMO.

In 1967 P.N. Haskar was appointed to PMO from 1967-1977. PMO became the most powerful organ replacing Cabinet Secretariat. It fell to the temptation of by passing the formal channels of hierarchy and created a rival power centre to Cabinet Secretariat. Apart from administrative functions, it also performed political functions of the PM, in the process politicizing administrative organs.

Janatha Party came to power in 1977 and initially it restored the balance of power in favour of Cabinet Secretariat but faced with political instability PM Morargi Desai took the help of PMO in performing political functions.

Indira Gandhi returned to power in 1980 and P. C. Asexander was made the head of PMO. During this period cabinet secretary regained its confidence and PMO acted as an institution to aid and advice the PM.

During the tenure of Rajiv Gandhi PMO again became powerful as it was filled technocrats and specialists in administrator but cabinet secretary retained its own identity and there was coordination between the two during this period.

PMO again became powerful during the tenure of P. V. Narsimha Rao as it extended its scope of authority to all department within the government. During the tenure of Vajpayee PMO though was powerful cabinet secretariat also retained its identity.

Conclusion

At present PMO has more than 350 people looking under it. It has a large establishment and every ministry/department of Central Government is represented in PMO. Because of the authority yielded by the PMO it has been criticised as 'Super cabinet', 'Super Ministry' the 'Government of the Government of India.'

Because of the enlarging scope of functions performed by PM, PMO has become a necessity the power and prestige enjoyed by PMO since independence reflected, the power and prestige enjoyed by the prime minister respectively. In Prime Ministerial form of Government, PMO enjoyed unquestioned power and relegated CS to the secondary position.

Under the present circumstances PMO should be a highly professional body and should function through the system and not try to bypass it. Increasing complexity of governance, while the PM deals with the contenders for power and deals with socio, economic and political complexities at home and abroad, cannot deal with himself without a score of specialised advisors on the patterns of US president. Prime Minister should keep a crucial watch over the performance of his ministers to ensure a proper image of his government and should also display equal vigilance to ensure that the officials in the PMO do not misuse their position and power. Both CS and PMO perform the role of coordination but of different types. PMO has to coordinate with the PM's team of ministers to enable the PM to discharge his responsibilities as the chief executive. It is the job of the CS to coordinate the work of Council of Ministers.

Civil Society Organizations

Introduction:

Civil Society refers to the intermediate sphere between the state and the private realm of the family, in which the citizens associate voluntarily and organise independently to manage their own affairs.

“Civil Society... is the totality of social institutions and associations, both formal and informal that are not strictly production-related nor governmental or familial in character.”

Functions of a Civil Society

- (1) It limits, controls and monitors state power on the one hand, and on the other hand, it completes and improves the state by enhancing its democratic legitimacy and effectiveness;
- (2) It stimulates political participation and promotes democratic skills amongst the population;
- (3) It helps to promote a democratic political culture;
- (4) It may structure multiple channels, beyond parties, for articulating, aggregating and representing interests;
- (5) It helps to effect ‘ a transition from clientilism to citizenship’ at the local level;
- (6) It can generate a wide range of cross-cutting interest thereby reducing political polarity;
- (7) It recruits and trains new political leaders
- (8) It can carry out other functions such as election monitoring;
- (9) It disseminates information
- (10) It helps to achieve economic reform in new democracies by disseminating information and neutralising resistance to economic reforms
- (11) It offers services and develops techniques of conflict mediating and resolution
- (12) It strengthens community initiatives thereby relieving the burden of the state.

Critique of Civil Society

Civil Society is about maintaining the boundaries between state and civil society as a basic structural pre-condition for democracy, whilst at once reinvigorating the public sphere in accordance with the politics of deepening democracy.

The renewed and invigorated faith in the liberal separation of spheres, however, is not without its consequence. First, it results in a tendency to present civil society as an idealised sphere, free from power relations, whose borders can, and should, be defended against the encroachment of the state and the economy. However, such an account, based on the ideal separating of spheres rather than their mutual interdependence, fails to adequately conceptualise the nature and

extent of the interactions between these realms as well as the power relations that are as much constitutive of civil society as they are of the state and the economy.

Problems also arise when it comes to conceptualising the relationship of the market to civil society. Although in the broader sense, civil society can contain a good deal more than the market economy, it is vital to keep in mind that the market economy forms the basis of civil society. Failure to do so results in the weakening of civil society as an analytical and normative concept because it again runs the risk of presenting an 'idealised' picture of civil society.

Validity of Civil Society

Despite the above difficulties, civil society can still be an important conceptual tool if the following points are taken into account. First, civil society allows us to combine theory with empiricism because, it is 'at one and the same time a social value and a set of social institutions'. This is why civil society is so useful. It can be used both as a tool for analysing political change by situating it within a definite historical period and specific social context, and as an important normative concept for political critique.

Interest Groups

An **interest group** (also **advocacy group**, **lobby group**, **pressure group** or **special interest group**) is an organized collection of people who seek to influence political decisions. It is a private organization that tries to persuade public officials to act or vote according to group members' interests.

Types of groups **Sectional**

Sectional groups represent the interests of their members. They include:

- business groups, such as the Confederation of British Industry;
- professional bodies, such as the British Medical Association; and
- trade unions.

In the course of representing the interest of their members these groups are often active participants in the political process. They may have both well defined political agendas and the financial resources necessary to exert broad influence on the political and regulatory process; utilizing direct lobbying, letter-writing campaigns, and voter turnout efforts during elections.

Promotional or single-issue groups

Promotional or single-issue groups (cause or attitude groups) seek to influence policy in a particular area, such as the environment (Greenpeace), gun laws (National Rifle Association), the protection of birds (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds), or animal rights (People for the Ethical Treatment of

Animals). These tend to be aligned toward a political ideology or seek influence in specific policy areas.

'Fire brigade'

'Fire brigade' groups lobby on a specific issue such as War in Iraq or the Poll Tax. They usually disband as soon as the issue has been resolved.

Benefits and incentives

The general theory is that individuals must be enticed with some type of benefit to join an interest group. Known as the Free Rider Problem, it refers to the difficulty of obtaining members of a particular interest group when the benefits are already reaped without membership. For instance, an interest group dedicated to improving farming standards will fight for the general goal of improving farming for every farmer, even those who are not members of that particular interest group. So there is no real incentive to join an interest group and pay dues if they will receive that benefit anyway. Interest groups must receive dues and contributions from its members in order to accomplish its agenda. While every individual in the world would benefit from a cleaner environment, that Environmental protection interest group does not, in turn, receive monetary help from every individual in the world.

Selective material benefits are benefits that are usually given in monetary benefits. For instance, if an interest group gives a material benefit to their member, they could give them travel discounts, free meals at certain restaurants, or free subscriptions to magazines, newspapers, or journals. Many trade and professional interest groups tend to give these types of benefits to their members. A selective solidary benefit is another type of benefit offered to members or prospective members of an interest group. These incentives involve benefits like "socializing congeniality, the sense of group membership and identification, the status resulting from membership, fun and conviviality, the maintenance of social distinctions, and so on. A solidary incentive is when the rewards for participation are socially derived and created out of the act of association.

An expressive incentive is another basic type of incentive or benefit offered to being a member of an interest group. People who join an interest group because of expressive benefits likely joined to express an ideological or moral value that they believe in. Some include free speech, civil rights, economic justice, or political equality. To obtain these types of benefits, members would simply pay dues, donate their time or money to get a feeling of satisfaction from expressing a political value. Also, it would not matter if the interest group achieved their goal, but these members would be able to say they helped out in the process of trying to obtain these goals, which is the expressive incentive that they got in the first place. The types of interest groups that rely on expressive benefits or incentives would be environmental groups and groups who claim to be lobbying for the public interest

Some public policy interests are not recognized or addressed by a group at all, and these interests are labeled latent interests.

Interest groups around the world

Lobbying in the United States

Pressure groups in the United Kingdom

Voluntary Organizations

A **voluntary organization** is a group of individuals who voluntarily enter into an agreement to form a body (or organization) to accomplish a purpose.

Strictly speaking in many jurisdictions no formalities are necessary to start an association. In some jurisdictions, there is a minimum for the number of persons starting an association. Some jurisdictions require that the association register with the police or other official body to inform the public of the association's existence. This is not necessarily a tool of political control but much more a way of protecting the economy from fraud. In many such jurisdictions, only a registered association is a juristic person whose membership is not responsible for the financial acts of the association. Any group of persons may, of course, work as an association but in such case, the persons making a transaction in the name of the association are all responsible for it.

Self Help Groups

Self Help Groups (SHGs) are small groups of poor people. The members of an SHG face similar problems. They help each other, to solve their problems. SHGs promote small savings among their members. The savings are kept with the bank. This is the common fund in the name of the SHG. The SHG gives small loans to its members from its common fund

SHG is an informal group and registration under any Societies Act, State cooperative Act or a partnership firm is not mandatory vide Circular RPCD.No. Plan BC.13/PL - 09.22/90- 91 dated July 24th, 1991.

Functioning of SHGs

Size of the SHG

- The ideal size of an SHG is 10 to 20 members. (Advantage: In a bigger group, members cannot actively participate. Also, legally it is required that an informal group should not be of more than 20 people.).
- The group need not be registered.

Membership

- From one family, only one person can become a member of an SHG. (More families can join SHGs this way.)
- The group normally consists of either only men or of only women. Mixed groups are generally not preferred. Women's groups are generally found to perform better. (They are better in savings and they usually ensure proper use of loans.)
- Members should have the same social and financial background. (Advantage: This makes it easier for the members to interact freely with each other. If members are both from rich as well as poor class, the poor may hardly get an opportunity to express themselves.)
- Some Common factors for Membership in an SHG
 - Women/men from very poor households.
 - Those who depend on moneylenders even for daily necessities.
 - Those with a per capita income not exceeding Rs. 250 per month.
 - Those having dry land holding not exceeding 2.5 acres.
 - Common living conditions for the Group Members eg. Living in kutchha houses, Having no access to safe drinking water, Presence of illiterate adults in the family etc

Meetings

- The group should meet regularly. Ideally, the meetings should be weekly or at least monthly. (Advantage: They become closer, if they meet regularly. This helps them to understand each other's difficulties better.)
- Compulsory attendance: Full attendance in all the group meetings will make it easy for the SHG to stabilise and start working to the satisfaction of all.
- Membership register, minutes register etc., are to be kept up to date by the group by making the entries regularly. (Advantage: This helps you to know about the SHG easily. It also helps to build trust among the SHG members.)

Keeping of Accounts by the SHG

- Simple and clear books for all transactions to be maintained.
- If no member is able to maintain the books, the SHG may take outside help. (It has been seen that a boy or a girl from the village with some educational qualification does this job enthusiastically. After some months, the group can even consider giving him or her a small reward for this job.). Animator can also help.
- All registers and account books should be written during the course of the meeting. (Advantage: This creates confidence in the minds of members who are unable to read and write.)
- Books to be kept by an SHG
 - **Minutes Book:** The proceedings of meetings, the rules of the group, names of the members etc. are recorded in this book.

- ***Savings and Loan Register:*** Shows the savings of members separately and of the group as a whole. Details of individual loans, repayments, interest collected, balance, etc. are entered here.
- ***Weekly /Fortnightly/Monthly Register:*** Summary of receipts and payments, updated in every meeting.
- ***Members' Passbooks:*** Individual members' pass books in which individual's savings and loan balance outstanding is regularly entered. (Advantage: this encourages regular savings.)

Major Functions of an SHG

- **Savings and Thrift:**
 - All SHG members regularly save a small amount. The amount may be small, but savings have to be a regular and continuous habit with all the members.
 - “Savings first — Credit later” should be the motto of every SHG member.
 - SHG members take a step towards self-dependence when they start small savings. They learn financial discipline through savings and internal lending. (Advantage: This is useful when they use bank loans.)
- **Internal lending:**
 - The SHG should use the savings amount for giving loans to members.
 - The purpose, amount, rate of interest, schedule of repayment etc., are to be decided by the group itself.
 - Proper accounts to be kept by the SHG.
- **Discussing problems:** In every meeting, the SHG should be encouraged to discuss and try to find solutions to the problems faced by the members of the group. Individually, the poor people are weak and lack resources to solve their problems. When the group tries to help its members, it becomes easier for them to face the difficulties and come up with solutions.
- **Taking bank loan:** The SHG takes loan from the bank and gives it as loan to its members.

Members also make small regular savings contributions over a few months until there is enough money in the group to begin lending. Funds may then be lent back to the members or to others in the village for any purpose. In India, many SHGs are linked with banks for the delivery of micro-credit.

Structure

A SHG (self help group) is a community based group with 10-25 members. They are usually women from similar social and economic backgrounds, all voluntarily coming together to save small sums of money, on a regular basis. They pool their resources to become financially stable, taking loans from their collective savings in times of emergency or financial scarcity, important life events or to purchase assets. The group members use collective wisdom and peer pressure to ensure proper end-use of credit and timely repayment. In India, RBI regulations mandates that banks offer financial

services, including collateral free loans to these groups on very low interest rates. This allows poor women to circumvent the challenges of exclusion from institutional financial services. This system is closely related to that of solidarity lending, widely used by microfinance institutions.

Beyond their function as a savings and credit group, SHGs offer poor women a platform for building solidarity. They allow women to come together and act on issues related to their own lives including health, nutrition, governance and gender justice.

Goals

Self-help groups are started by non-governmental organizations (NGO) that generally have broad anti-poverty agendas. Self-help groups are seen as instruments for goals including empowering women, developing leadership abilities among poor and the needy people, increasing school enrolments and improving nutrition and the use of birth control. Financial intermediation is generally seen more as an entry point to these other goals, rather than as a primary objective.^[5] This can hinder their development as sources of village capital, as well as their efforts to aggregate locally controlled pools of capital through federation, as was historically accomplished by credit unions.

NABARD's 'SHG Bank Linkage' program

Many self-help groups, especially in India, under NABARD's 'SHG Bank Linkage' program, borrow from banks once they have accumulated a base of their own capital. This model has attracted attention as a possible way of delivering micro-finance services to poor populations that have been difficult to reach directly through banks or other institutions. "By aggregating their individual savings into a single deposit, self-help groups minimize the bank's transaction costs and generate an attractive volume of deposits. Through self-help groups, the bank can serve small rural depositors while paying them a market rate of interest."^[6]

According to a report from 2006, NABARD estimates that there are 2.2 million SHGs in India, representing 33 million members, that have taken loans from banks under its linkage program to date. This does not include SHGs that have not borrowed.^[7] A study conducted by S Chakrabarti in 2004 said that organization like SHG can be an effective tool for "allevating poverty" "The SHG Banking Linkage Programme since its beginning has been predominant in certain states, showing spatial preferences especially for the southern region – Andhra-Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka. These states accounted for 57% of the SHG credits linked during the financial year 2005–2006."

Advantages of financing through SHGs

An economically poor individual gains strength as part of a group

- Besides, financing through SHGs transaction costs for both lenders and borrowers.
- While lenders have to handle only a triple SHG account instead of a large number of small-sized individual accounts, borrowers as part of an SHG minimize or travel

(to and from the branch and other places) for completing paper work and on the loss of workdays in canvassing for loans.

- Where successful, SHGs have significantly empowered poor people, especially women, in rural areas.
- SHGs have helped immensely in reducing the influence of informal lenders in rural areas.
- Many big corporate houses are also promoting SHGs at many places in India.
- SHGs help borrowers overcome the problem of lack of collateral. Women can discuss their problem and find solutions for it.¹

Problems of Self-Help Groups (SHGs):

The SHGs face problems in different areas.

The important problems are briefly stated below:

1. Ignorance of Members/Participants:

Even though the authorities take measures for creating awareness among the group members about the schemes beneficial to them, still majority of the group are unaware of the schemes of assistance offered to them.

Many are Ignorant about the scheme.

2. Inadequate Training Facilities:

The training facilities given to the members of SHGs in the specific areas of product selection, quality of products, production techniques, managerial ability, packing, other technical knowledge etc. are not adequate to compete with that of strong units.

3. Problems Related with Raw Materials:

Normally each SHG procures raw materials individually from the suppliers. They purchase raw materials in smaller quantities and hence they may not be able to enjoy the benefits of large scale purchase like discount, credit facilities etc.

Moreover, there is no systematic arrangement to collect raw materials in bulk quantities and preserve them properly. There is no linkage with major suppliers of raw materials. Most of the SHGs are Ignorant about the major raw material suppliers and their terms and conditions. All these causes high cost of raw materials.

4. Problems of Marketing:

Marketing is an important area of functioning of the SHGs. However they face different problems in the marketing of products produced by them.

Following are the major problems relating to marketing.

- (a) Lack of sufficient orders.
- (b) Lack of linkage with the marketing agencies.
- (c) Lack of adequate sales promotion measures.
- (d) Lack of permanent market for the products of SHGs.
- (e) Absence of proper brand name.
- (f) Poor/unattractive packing system.
- (g) Poor quality of products due to the application of traditional technology, resulting in poor market,

- (h) Stiff competition from other major suppliers.
- (i) Lack of a well defined and well knit channel of distribution for marketing.

5. *Lack of Stability and Unity Especially among women SHGs:*

In the case of SHGs dominated by women, it is found that there is no stability of the units as, many married women are not in a position to associate with the group due to the shift of their place of residence. Moreover, there is no unity among women members owing to personal reasons.

6. *Exploitation by Strong Members:*

It is also observed that in the case of many SHGs, strong members try to earn a lion's share of the profit of the group, by exploiting the ignorance and illiterate members.

7. *Weak Financial Management:*

It is also found that in certain units the return from the business is not properly invested further in the units, and the funds diverted for other personal and domestic purposes like marriage, construction of house etc.

8. *Low Return:*

The return on investment is not attractive in certain groups due to inefficient management, high cost of production, absence of quality consciousness etc.

9. *Inadequate Financial Assistance:*

It is found that in most of the SHGs, the financial assistance provided to them by the agencies concerned is not adequate to meet their actual requirements. The financial authorities are not giving adequate subsidy to meet even the labour cost requirements.

10. *Non-co-operative Attitude of the Financial Institutions:*

The Financial Institutions do not consider SHGs seriously while providing finance and other help.

11. *Inadequate and ill-trained staff to meet the challenges:*

The attitude of the staff of the rural development department is not encouraging. They are not well trained to accept the challenges and equip the SHGs self-reliance.

X12. *Inadequate Support from Line Department:*

For obtaining assistance and support, the group members have to approach the line officers. However the line officers are not co-operative with the SHGs. This will hamper the very objective of the schemes.

Suggestions to Minimize the Problems Faced by SHGs:

The following suggestions are offered to minimize the above mentioned issues of SHGs:

1. Information about locally available materials and their varied uses should be disseminated to SHGs. Proper encouragement and training should be given to them to make innovative products by using these materials. In order to have a knowledge base about the availability of materials, in panchayat levels, surveys can be conducted under the auspices of local authorities.
2. In order to solve the various problems relating to marketing of SHGs, the state level organisations should extend the activities throughout the state instead of limiting its operations in a particular area.
3. Various SHGs functioning in a particular panchayat area can form a co-operative society. This society may be entrusted with the task of marketing the products of different SHGs under a common brand name. Further, the society can undertake sales promotion activities and procure rare raw materials for the benefits of member SHGs.

4. Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) can play a significant role in empowering women entrepreneurs by providing basic education, motivation training, and financial help and so on.

5. All the members in the SHGs may not have the same caliber and expertise. NGOs can identify the inefficient members of the group and can impart proper training to them in order to make them competent. For this purpose, short term training programmes can be arranged at the panchayat level.

6. Frequent awareness camps can be organised by the Rural Development department authorities to create awareness about the different schemes of assistance available to the participants in the SHGs.

7. Lastly, arrangements may be made by the financial institutions for providing adequate financial assistance to the SHGs strictly on the basis of their actual performance without any discrimination of caste, politics etc.

In the emerging changes in the values and attitudes of the members of the SHGs are a clear manifestation of socio-economic empowerment interventions yielding relatively quicker results. The socio-economic programmes reinforce each other and promote all-round development of the children, the women, the households and the communities.

It is a process which ultimately leads to self-fulfillment of each member of the society. It is in this direction that SHGs are moving towards fulfilling their objectives with a meaningful strategic direction.

Role of Media

Access to information is essential to the health of democracy for at least two reasons. First, it ensures that citizens make responsible, informed choices rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation. Second, information serves a “checking function” by ensuring that elected representatives uphold their oaths of office and carry out the wishes of those who elected them. In some societies, an antagonistic relationship between media and government represents a vital and healthy element of fully functioning democracies. In post-conflict or ethnically homogenous societies such a conflictual, tension ridden relationship may not be appropriate, but the role of the press to disseminate information as a way of mediating between the state and all facets of civil society remains critical.

For example, support for media may yield results in governance activities, particularly those related to decentralization, anti-corruption, and citizen participation in the policy process. The rule of law may be further institutionalized by support for an independent media that keeps a check on the judiciary, reports on the courts, and promotes a legal enabling environment suitable for press freedom. Free and fair elections conducted through transparent processes require a media sector which gives candidates equal access, and reports the relevant issues in a timely, objective manner.

Most notably, Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

Within the context of supporting democratic transitions, the goal of media development generally should be to move the media from one that is directed or even overtly controlled by government or private interests to one that is more open and has a degree of editorial independence that serves the public interest. If the media is to have any meaningful role in democracy, then the ultimate goal of media assistance should be to develop a range of diverse mediums and voices that are credible, and to create and strengthen a sector that promotes such outlets. Credible outlets enable citizens to have access to information that they need to make informed decisions and to participate in society. A media sector supportive of democracy would be one that has a degree of editorial independence, is financially viable, has diverse and plural voices, and serves the public interest. The public interest is defined as representing a plurality of voices both through a greater number of outlets and through the diversity of views and voices reflected within one outlet.

Citizen's Charter – An Instrument of Public Accountability: Problems and Prospects in India

Introduction

In Westminster model of parliamentary democracy, the concept of administrative accountability has primarily rested on a single principle of responsibility – “the ministerial responsibility”- that is, the responsibility of the ministers of state to parliament. However, in recent times, this concept has been found wanting in its ability to ensure democratic control of a large, active and increasingly complex executive branch of government.

The relevance of the doctrine of ministerial responsibility and its concomitant principle of civil service anonymity are being questioned in the present-day context of the management of public programmes and services.

Thus, the most challenging issue that faces most parliamentary democracies, especially in India, is not only the responsibility of public bureaucracy to the citizen's per se, but also the ways it could made more prompt, responsive and cost effective.

Changing Notions of Administrative Accountability: Government's accountability syndrome has been changing over the last half a century in almost all the democratic systems. It has gone beyond the bureaucratic or hierarchical notions of control and formal explanations through Annual Reports or periodical submission of the public agencies. The issue of accountability now looks more pinpointing to the responsibility of individual agencies and functionaries rather than to political or bureaucratic authorities as a whole.

Parliamentary Control: Parliamentary control is obviously the traditional Westminster understanding of accountability as interpreted by Mill and Bagehot,

that administrators should be continuously responsive to the concerns of members of parliament. It is related to three fundamental sanctions of powers available to parliament: its power to legislate, its power to withhold support from ministers, and its power to appropriate moneys. Such responsiveness does not necessarily require active parliamentary supervision – the sort of continuous monitoring and detailed intervention that is associated in other contexts – but only envisages that prompt answers can be given and remedial action taken by ministers on issues under scrutiny by the parliament.

Managerial Control: The second aspect of control ‘managerialism’ is the corporate management approach to public administration, which has been a major component of administrative reforms in the 1980s and 1990s in many governments. Here, the emphasis is on “strategic, rather than detailed, control; an emphasis on agency self-evaluation, and reporting plus periodic, formal external evaluation, and a ‘rationalisation’ of agency responsiveness”. In distinction to parliamentary accountability, the managerialist view of accountability requires the agency to meet certain objective tests or to satisfy certain objective “specialised performance values”.

Judicial/Quasi-Judicial Review: The third notion of accountability as judicial or quasi-judicial review is most evident in the imposition of legal values on decision-making through expansion of judicial and quasi-judicial review of administrative action. The scope of judicial review has been progressively widening in recent years, rules governing citizen access to review have been eased, and the courts have shown an increased desire to exercise review. In addition, advent of public interest litigation (PIL), as in India, has even prompted the judiciary to direct administrative agencies to take prompt action on certain issues of public interest, where these have been neglected by the public agencies.

Accountability to Clientele: The “constituency relations” approach to accountability is not only the traditional legislators’ accountability to their constituents, but in broader terms it also acknowledges a ‘downward’ accountability to clienteles, and ‘horizontal’ accountability to peers and other reference groups.

Accountability to Market or Customers: The fifth notion of accountability is related to the tendency of a more ‘customer driven’ attitude adopted in providing ‘efficient’ and ‘prompt’ public services to the citizens by creating opportunities for customers to ‘exit’ by means of ‘denationalisation’ and ‘deregulation’.

Strategy of Introducing Citizen’s Charter in U.K.: Until the decades of 1980s, growing state activity, increasing complexity of administration, consequential explosion of points of contact between the State and the citizen has made control of maladministration and administrative injustice an impossible task for both an overburdened court system and elected representatives. Even introduction of the idea of a system of Ombudsman has failed to secure a modicum of public

accountability, which would ensure prompt, qualitative, and cost-effective services to the citizens.

Three Reform Steps Preceding the Charter: By early 1980s, the government was seeking ways of improving quality of public services without adding to their costs. A series of major reforms were instigated, aimed at injecting greater economy, efficiency and effectiveness into the public services.

In order to raise standards of public services by making them more responsive to the wishes and needs of the users, Prime Minister John Major launched the strategy of the Citizen's Charter 1991.

The Main Four Themes: The four main themes to Charter strategy are quality, choice, standards, and value. It is based on the recognition that all public services are paid for by individual citizens, either directly or through taxes. Therefore, they are entitled to accept high quality services, responsive to their needs, provided efficiently at a reasonable cost. The six key principles of Charter programme spelled out in detail at a later stage are setting standards, information and openness, choice and consultation, courtesy and helpfulness, putting things right and value for money. The Charter initiative embraces greater competition, independent scrutiny of public services, greater accountability and openness and a programme of management change to improve public services.

Key Elements of Setting of Charters: The key elements in the setting of citizen's charters mentioned above can be spelled out as under:

Standards: Setting, monitoring and publication of explicit standards for the services that individual users can reasonably expect. Publication of actual performance against these standards.

Information and Openness: Full, accurate information, readily available in plain language, about how well they perform and who is in-charge.

Choice and Consultation: The public sector should provide choice wherever practicable. There should be regular and systematic consultation with those, who use services. User's views about services and their priorities are to be taken into account for final decisions on standards.

Courtesy and Helpfulness: Courtesy and helpful service from public servants who will normally wear name badge. Service available equally to all those who are entitled to them and run to suit their convenience.

Putting Things Right: If things go wrong, an apology, a full explanation, and a swift and effective remedy to be offered. Well published and easy to use complaint procedures with independent reviews, wherever possible to be introduced and maintained.

Value for Money: Efficient and economical delivery of public services within the resources, the nation can afford. And, independent validation of performance against standards.

Charters Espouse 'Total Quality Approach': The concept of citizen's charter is although ostensibly designed to introduce the 'total quality approach' in

improving the level of service in public organisations, and increase user improvement but inherently one of its most central concerns is the reorganisation of management structure and financial responsibility of the organisation involved in public service provision and delivery.

Citizen's Charter Scheme in India

Recommendation of Chief Secretaries Conference (1996): Sharing the concern for ensuring responsive, accountable, transparent, decentralised and people-friendly administration at all levels, and with the objective of restoring faith of the people in the fairness and capacity for administration against the prevailing frustration and dissatisfaction, the then Prime Minister of India, had inaugurated a conference of Chief Secretaries in 1996 called to develop "An Agenda for an Effective and Responsive Administration" to make the public services more efficient, clean accountable and citizen-friendly. The conference inter alia recommended that accountability should be interpreted in a larger sense in relation to public satisfaction and responsive delivery of services, and a phased introduction of Citizen's Charter for as many service institutions as possible by way of citizen's entitlement to public services, collaboration of consumer organisations and citizen groups, the wide publicity to standards of performance, quality, timeliness, cost, etc., for public services, and promotion of periodic and independent scrutiny of performance of the agencies against the standards.

Action Plan in Chief Ministers Conference (1997): As a sequel, the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Services in 1997 evolved an "Action Plan on Effective and Responsive Administration", based on the responses and reactions received from officials, experts, voluntary agencies, citizen's groups, media, etc. The three main areas of Action Plan that were discussed in the Conference of Chief Ministers on May 24, 1997 were: (1) making administration accountable and citizen-friendly; (2) ensuring transparency and the right to information; and (3) taking measures to cleanse and motivate civil services. An implementation committee was set up under the Chairmanship of the Cabinet Committee to formulate ways and means to implement the above stated concerns of the Action Plan.

Role of Consumer Coordination Council of 'Common Course': The concept of citizen's charter in India was picked up and pushed forward by the Consumer Coordination Council (CCC) and its associate the 'Common Cause' (headed by H.D. Shourie) in association with the Cabinet Secretariat. Since then, 33 charters have already been published by the respective service agencies, copies of which are freely available.

Tentative Assessment of Citizen's Charter: Although not justiciable but these Charters aim at affirming the commitment of an organisation to the people that it will deliver its particular services promptly, maintain quality and that redressal machinery will be available where this service is not of the standard which it is committed to maintain.

Measures to improve Working of the Citizen's Charter in India

Need for Greater Coordination and Consistency: One of the primary requirements of success of such a scheme is the need for a greater degree of coordination and consistency in terms of formulation of the Charter. Grievance procedures and monitoring needs to be developed with consistency in their underlying principles, along with the necessary investment of time and resources. Charters should be based on people rather than given to them. There is a need to evaluate the services based on the experience of users, rather than the process of how and what is provided. The Charters should aim at maximum possible satisfaction of people's needs in the shortest possible time and without any inconvenience. These should be built around multiple needs of users rather than being drawn from what the disparate service organisations presently offer. The assessment of users' needs and expectations is an essential condition, if the people's evaluation of the movement and public services are to be saved from meeting failure.

Implementing Standards: Also, it must be noted that it is somewhat easier to set standards, but difficult to implement. In the Indian context, availability of adequate manpower and national resources available keep up these standards, particularly in the context of essential services to be provided at the local, rural and urban settings is a necessary condition for success of the scheme.

Efficiency of Grievance Redressal Machinery: Similarly, one of the most important conditions of the success of the Charter scheme is to strengthen the efficiency of its grievance procedure machinery.

Protecting it from political and bureaucracy's influence: Another important aspect of the success of the charter scheme is to keep the whole system of public services away from political or bureaucratic influences.

Offering Incentives to Personnel and Institutions: Finally, the Charter scheme's success is predicated on the incentives available to the officials and the institutions to perform as a team with the maximum efficiency of their 'competence', and with the sole objective of achieving 'performance' at the lowest cost.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the Citizen's Charter strategy, if formulated and implemented in an objective, conscious, and committed manner to give the citizens their due can lead us "Towards Good Governance". The most positive aspects of this programme relate to its emphasis on disseminating information to the general public and laying down some of the basic principles which should be the concern of any organisation involved in the delivery of public services.

Right to Information

The **Right to Information Act 2005** (Act No. 22/2005) is a law enacted by the Parliament of India giving citizens of India access to records of the Central Government and State Governments. The Act applies to all States and Union Territories of India, except the State of Jammu and Kashmir - which is covered under a State-level law. Under the provisions of the Act, any citizen (including the citizens within J&K) may request information from a "public authority" (a body of Government or "instrumentality of State") which is required to reply expeditiously or within thirty days. The Act also requires every public authority to computerise their records for wide dissemination and to proactively publish certain categories of information so that the citizens need minimum recourse to request for information formally.

This law was passed by Parliament on 15 June 2005 and came fully into force on 13 October 2005. Information disclosure in India was hitherto restricted by the Official Secrets Act 1923 and various other special laws, which the new RTI Act now relaxes.

Background

Disclosure of Government Information in India is governed by a law enacted during the British rule over large parts of what is now India, the Official Secrets Act of 1889 which was amended in 1923. This law secures information related to security of the State, sovereignty of the country and friendly relations with foreign states, and contains provisions which prohibit disclosure of non-classified information. Civil Service conduct rules and the Indian Evidence Act impose further restrictions on government officials' powers to disclose information to the public.

In 1975, the Supreme Court delivered a landmark judgement on the citizen's Right to Know.

State-level laws

The RTI Laws were first successfully enacted by the state governments — Tamil Nadu (1997), Goa (1997), Rajasthan (2000), Karnataka (2000), Delhi (2001), Maharashtra (2002), Madhya Pradesh (2003), Assam (2002) and Jammu and Kashmir (2004).

The Maharashtra and Delhi State level enactments are considered to have been the most widely used. The Delhi and J&K Right to Information Acts are still in force, and the latter was amended in 2008 to incorporate features of the (Central) Right to Information Act, 2005.

Freedom of Information Act

Passage of a national level law, however, proved to be a difficult task. Given the experience of state governments in passing practicable legislation, the Central

Government appointed a working group under H. D. Shourie and assigned it the task of drafting legislation. The Shourie draft, in an extremely diluted form, was the basis for the Freedom of Information Bill, 2000 which eventually became law under the Freedom of Information Act, 2002. This Act was severely criticised for permitting too many exemptions, not only under the standard grounds of national security and sovereignty, but also for requests that would involve "disproportionate diversion of the resources of a public authority". There was no upper limit on the charges that could be levied. There were no penalties for not complying with a request for information. The FoI Act, consequently, never came into effective force.

Enactment

The doomed FoI Act led to sustained pressure for a better National RTI enactment. The first draft of the Right to Information Bill was presented to Parliament on 22 December 2004. After intense debate, more than a hundred amendments to the draft Bill were made between December 2004 and 15 June 2005, when the bill finally passed. The Act came fully into effect on 13 October 2005.

Scope

The Act covers the whole of India except Jammu and Kashmir. It is applicable to all constitutional authorities, including the executive, legislature and judiciary; any institution or body established or constituted by an act of Parliament or a state legislature. It is also defined in the Act that bodies or authorities established or constituted by order or notification of appropriate government including bodies "owned, controlled or substantially financed" by government, or non-Government organizations "substantially financed, directly or indirectly by funds" provided by the government are also covered in the Act's ambit

Private bodies are not within the Act's ambit directly. However, information that can be accessed under any other law in force by a public authority can also be requested for. In a landmark decision of 30-Nov-2006 ('Sarbjit Roy versus DERC') the Central Information Commission also reaffirmed that privatised public utility companies continue to be within the RTI Act- their privatisation notwithstanding. The Act also explicitly overrides the Official Secrets Act and other laws in force on 15-June-2005 to the extent of any inconsistency.

Information

The Act specifies that citizens have a right to:

- request any information (as defined).
- take copies of documents.
- inspect documents, works and records.

- take certified samples of materials of work.
- obtain information in form of printouts, diskettes, floppies, tapes, video cassettes **or in any other electronic mode** or through printouts.

Process

Under the Act, all authorities covered must appoint their **Public Information Officer** (PIO). Any person may submit a request to the PIO for information in writing. It is the PIO's obligation to provide information to citizens of India who request information under the Act. If the request pertains to another public authority (in whole or part) it is the PIO's responsibility to transfer/forward the concerned portions of the request to a PIO of the other within 5 days. In addition, every public authority is required to designate **Assistant Public Information Officers** (APIOs) to receive RTI requests and appeals for forwarding to the PIOs of their public authority. The citizen making the request is not obliged to disclose any information except his name and contact particulars.

The Act specifies time limits for replying to the request.

- If the request has been made to the PIO, the reply is to be given within **30 days** of receipt.
- If the request has been made to an APIO, the reply is to be given within **35 days** of receipt.
- If the PIO transfers the request to another public authority (better concerned with the information requested), the time allowed to reply is **30 days** but computed from the day after it is received by the PIO of the transferee authority.
- Information concerning corruption and Human Rights violations by scheduled Security agencies (those listed in the Second Schedule to the Act) is to be provided within **45 days** but with the prior approval of the Central Information Commission.
- However, if life or liberty of any person is involved, the PIO is expected to reply within **48 hours**.

Since the information is to be paid for, the reply of the PIO is necessarily limited to either denying the request (in whole or part) and/or providing a computation of "further fees". The time between the reply of the PIO and the time taken to deposit the further fees for information is excluded from the time allowed.

If information is not provided within this period, it is treated as deemed refusal. Refusal with or without reasons may be ground for appeal or complaint. Further, information not provided in the times prescribed is to be provided free of charge.

For Central Departments as of 2006, there is a fee of Rs. 10 for filing the request, Rs. 2 per page of information and Rs. 5 for each hour of inspection after the first hour. If the applicant is a Below Poverty Card holder, then no fee shall apply. Such BPL Card holders have to provide a copy of their BPL card along with their

application to the Public Authority. States Government and High Courts fix their own rules.

7(3) Controversy

There is a raging controversy whether sub-section 7(3) of the Act permits the PIO to demand unprescribed "further fees" from the applicants "representing the cost of providing the information". A full Bench of the Central Information Commission is likely to hear the matter in the second week of December 2008.

Information defined

In terms of the section 2(f) of the Act, information has been defined as any material in any form including records, documents, memos, e-mails, opinions, advices, press releases, circulars, orders, logbooks, contracts, reports, papers, samples, models, data material held in any electronic form and information relating to any private body which can be accessed by a public authority under any other law for the time being in force.

Right to information

Under the Act (section 2 (j), right to information includes the right to -

- inspect works, documents, records.
- take notes, extracts or certified copies of documents or records.
- take certified samples of material.
- obtain information in form of printouts, diskettes, floppies, tapes, video cassettes or in any other electronic mode or through printouts.

What is not open to disclosure?

The following is exempt from disclosure [S.8]

- information, disclosure of which would prejudicially affect the sovereignty and integrity of India, the security, *strategic, scientific or economic" interests of the State, relation with foreign State or lead to incitement of an offence;
- information which has been expressly forbidden to be published by any court of law or tribunal or the disclosure of which may constitute contempt of court;
- information, the disclosure of which would cause a breach of privilege of Parliament or the State Legislature;
- information including commercial confidence, trade secrets or intellectual property, the disclosure of which would harm the competitive position of a third party, unless the competent authority is satisfied that larger public interest warrants the disclosure of such information;

- information available to a person in his fiduciary relationship, unless the competent authority is satisfied that the larger public interest warrants the disclosure of such information;
- information received in confidence from foreign Government;
- information, the disclosure of which would endanger the life or physical safety of any person or identify the source of information or assistance given in confidence for law enforcement or security purposes;
- information which would impede the process of investigation or apprehension or prosecution of offenders;
- cabinet papers including records of deliberations of the Council of Ministers, Secretaries and other officers;
- information which relates to personal information the disclosure of which has no relationship to any public activity or interest, or which would cause unwarranted invasion of the privacy of the individual (but it is also provided that the information which cannot be denied to the Parliament or a State Legislature shall not be denied by this exemption);
- Notwithstanding any of the exemptions listed above, a public authority may allow access to information, if public interest in disclosure outweighs the harm to the protected interests. (NB: This provision is qualified by the proviso to sub-section 11(1) of the Act which exempts disclosure of "trade or commercial secrets protected by law" under this clause when read along with 8(1)(d)))

Partial disclosure

Section 10 of the Act allows those part(s) of the record which are not exempt from disclosure and which can reasonably be severed from parts containing exempt information to be provided.

Exclusions

Central Intelligence and Security agencies specified in the Second Schedule like IB, RAW, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, Central Economic Intelligence Bureau, Directorate of Enforcement, Narcotics Control Bureau, Aviation Research Centre, Special Frontier Force, BSF, CRPF, ITBP, CISF, NSG, Assam Rifles, Special Service Bureau, Special Branch (CID), Andaman and Nicobar, The Crime Branch-CID-CB, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Special Branch, Lakshadweep Police. Agencies specified by the State Governments through a Notification will also be excluded. The exclusion, however, is not absolute and these organizations have an obligation to provide information pertaining to allegations of corruption and human rights violations. Further, information relating to allegations of human rights violation could be given but only with the approval of the Central or State Information Commission

Role of the government

Section 26 of the Act enjoins the central government, as also the state governments of the Republic of India (excluding J&K), to initiate necessary steps to:

- Develop educational programmes for the public especially disadvantaged communities on RTI.
- Encourage Public Authorities to participate in the development and organization of such programmes.
- Promote timely dissemination of accurate information to the public.
- Train officers and develop training materials.
- Compile and disseminate a User Guide for the public in the respective official language.
- Publish names, designation postal addresses and contact details of PIOs and other information such as notices regarding fees to be paid, remedies available in law if request is rejected etc.

Power to make rules

The Central Government, State Governments and the Competent Authorities as defined in S.2(e) are vested with powers to make rules to carry out the provisions of the Right to Information Act, 2005. (S.27 & S.28)

Who has the power to deal with the difficulties while implementing this act?

- If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions in the Act, the Central Government may, by Order published in the Official Gazette, make provisions necessary/expedient for removing the difficulty. (S.30)

Effects

In the first year of National RTI, 42,876 (not yet official) applications for information were filed to Central (ie.Federal) public authorities. Of these 878 were disputed at the final appellate stage - the Central Information Commission at New Delhi. A few of these decisions have thereafter been mired in further legal controversy in the various High Courts of India. The first stay order against a final appellate decision of the Central Information Commission was granted on 3.May.2006 by the High Court of Delhi in WP(C)6833-35/2006 cited as "NDPL & Ors. versus Central Information Commission & Ors". The Government of India's purported intention in 2006 to amend the RTI Act was postponed after public disquiet.

Social Audit

Basis of social audit

Social audit as a term was used as far back as the 1950s. There has been a flurry of activity and interest in the last seven to eight years in India and neighboring countries. Voluntary development organizations are also actively concerned.

Social audit is based on the principle that democratic local governance should be carried out, as far as possible, with the consent and understanding of all concerned. It is thus a process and not an event.

What is a social audit?

A social audit is a way of measuring, understanding, reporting and ultimately improving an organization's social and ethical performance. A social audit helps to narrow gaps between vision/goal and reality, between efficiency and effectiveness. It is a technique to understand, measure, verify, report on and to improve the social performance of the organization.

Social auditing creates an impact upon governance. It values the voice of stakeholders, including marginalized/poor groups whose voices are rarely heard. Social auditing is taken up for the purpose of enhancing local governance, particularly for strengthening accountability and transparency in local bodies.

The key difference between development and social audit is that a social audit focuses on the neglected issue of social impacts, while a development audit has a broader focus including environment and economic issues, such as the efficiency of a project or programme.

Objectives of social audit

1. Assessing the physical and financial gaps between needs and resources available for local development
2. Creating awareness among beneficiaries and providers of local social and productive services.
3. Increasing efficacy and effectiveness of local development programmes.
4. Scrutiny of various policy decisions, keeping in view stakeholder interests and priorities, particularly of rural poor.
5. Estimation of the opportunity cost for stakeholders of not getting timely access to public services.

Advantages of social audit

- (a) Trains the community on participatory local planning.
- (b) Encourages local democracy.
- (c) Encourages community participation.
- (d) Benefits disadvantaged groups.
- (e) Promotes collective decision making and sharing responsibilities.
- (f) Develops human resources and social capital

To be effective, the social auditor must have the right to:

- seek clarifications from the implementing agency about any decision-making, activity, scheme, income and expenditure incurred by the agency;
- consider and scrutinize existing schemes and local activities of the agency; and
- access registers and documents relating to all development activities undertaken by the implementing agency or by any other government department.

This requires transparency in the decision-making and activities of the implementing agencies. In a way, social audit includes measures for enhancing transparency by enforcing the right to information in the planning and implementation of local development activities.

Public documents for social audit

(a) All budget allocations, beneficiary lists, muster rolls, bills, vouchers, accounts, etc. must be available for public scrutiny.

(b) All applications for licenses/permits and certificates issued by local self-government institutions must have a serial number. Registers indicating date of application and date of clearance in each case should be available for reference by any applicant. If possible, copies should be publicly displayed.

(c) Public assessment of tax, exemptions, grants, etc., to ensure there are no complaints of undue preferential treatment.

Several states have declared all Gram Panchayat plan documents related to beneficiary selection, budget cost estimates, etc. to be public documents. A daily notice to be posted at the site of all development works, lists names of workers, wages paid, cost and quantities of material, transport charges, etc.

However, social audit arrangements have mostly been ineffective because there is no legal provision for punitive action. States should enact legislation to facilitate social audit by the Gram Sabha.

Appropriate institutional level for social audit

The most appropriate institutional level for social audit is the Gram Sabha, which has been given 'watchdog' powers and responsibilities by the Panchayati Raj Acts in most States to supervise and monitor the functioning of panchayat elected representatives and government functionaries, and examine the annual statement of accounts and audit reports. These are implied powers indirectly empowering Gram Sabhas to carry out social audits in addition to other functions. Members of the Gram Sabha and the village panchayat, intermediate

panchayat and district panchayat through their representatives, can raise issues of social concern and public interest and demand an explanation.

Right to information for members of Gram Sabha

Some States have already passed Right to Information Acts. Notwithstanding some weaknesses, the Acts have opened the way for transparency in administration from the State to the panchayat level.

The Right to Information Acts specify the modalities for obtaining information and provide penalties for failing to furnish or supplying false information. The Acts facilitate social legislation such as on minimum wages and gender rights and, more importantly, pave the way for public debate on government development projects.

However, none of the Acts have defined the right to information to include inspection of works and documents, and the taking of notes and extracts. This is needed to make the social audit by the Gram Sabha more effective.

The Gram Sabha should have the mandate to: inspect all public documents related to budget allocations, list of beneficiaries, assistance under each scheme, muster rolls, bills, vouchers, accounts, etc., for scrutiny; examine annual statements of accounts and audit reports; discuss the report on the local administration of the preceding year; review local development for the year or any new activity programme; establish accountability of functionaries found guilty of violating established norms/rules; suggest measures for promoting transparency in identifying, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating relevant local development programmes; and ensure opportunity for rural poor to voice their concerns while participating in social audit meetings.

Social audit committees

Social audit can also be used for auditing the performance of all three PRI tiers with a social audit committee at each level. These committees should not be permanent, but can be set up depending on the nature of programmes/schemes to be audited.

Social audit committee members can be drawn from among programme stakeholders. It is advisable to use the services of retired functionaries of different organizations, teachers or persons of impeccable integrity living in the Zilla Panchayat/Block Panchayat/Gram Panchayat jurisdiction. Both facilitators and social audit committee members can be trained by social audit experts.

Key factors for successful social audit

- Level of information shared with and involvement of stakeholders, particularly of the rural poor, women, and other marginalized sections.
- Commitment, seriousness and clear responsibilities for follow-up actions by elected members of the Gram Panchayat.
- Involvement of key facilitators in the process.

How to enhance local capacities for social audit

- Organization of a mass campaign to increase public awareness about the meaning, scope, purpose and objectives of social audit.
- Establishment of a team of social audit experts in each district who are responsible for training social audit committee members (stakeholders).
- Implementation of training programmes on social auditing methods - conducting and preparing social audit reports, and presentation at Gram Sabha meetings.

Social development monitoring (SDM): a social audit process

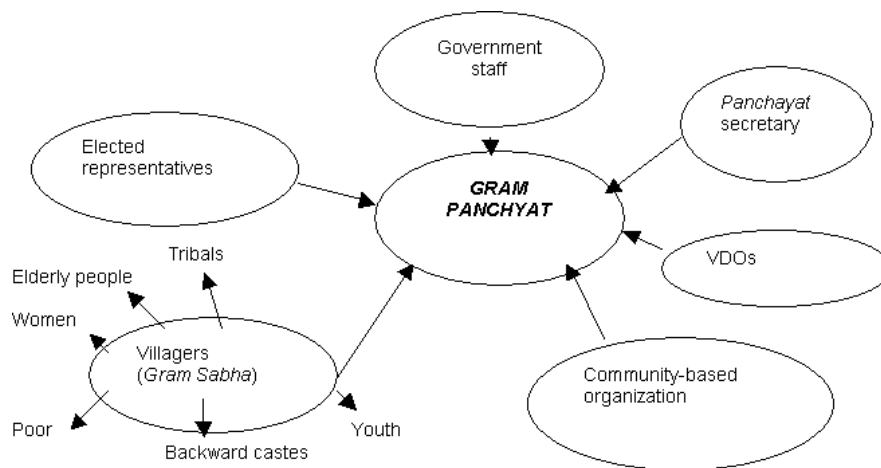
SDM is a periodic observation activity by socially disadvantaged groups as local citizens who are project participants or target beneficiaries. It could also take the form of action intended to enhance participation, ensure inclusiveness, articulation of accountability, responsiveness and transparency by implementing agencies or local institutions, with a declared purpose of making an impact on their socio-economic status.

Conclusion

To sum up, the following proposals can be made to make social audit a regular and effective institution to promote the culture of transparency and accountability through the Gram Sabha.

- States should enhance Gram Sabha powers to make them effective instruments of participatory decision-making and ensuring accountability of PRIs in local development planning.
- An agency like the Ombudsman can be set up to look into complaints of local maladministration.
- Development functionaries found guilty of violating established norms for local development planning should be punished.
- It is important to ensure that rural poor are given due protection when they wish to stand up to speak against any misconduct.

GRAM PANCHAYAT STAKEHOLDERS



Examples of social audit

1. Social audit in Jharnipalli Panchayat, Agaipur block, Bolangir district, Orissa

In October 2001, the gram sabha members of Jharnipalli Panchayat conducted a one-day social audit of development works carried out in the panchayat over the preceding three years. This audit took place with the active participation of many individuals and agencies, including block and district administration officials, MKSS [Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sanghatan], NCPRI [National Campaign for People's Right to Information] and Action Aid India.

The audit found that:

Although the works were not carried out, the sanctioned funds were shown in the records as having been utilized. Contractors were banned under government guidelines, but 31 contractors were working on the project. Muster rolls were not maintained by the contractors.

Instead of the target of 100 man-days of employment for families below the poverty line (BPL), only 12 half days of work were generated.

The BPL families could not buy subsidized food from the public distribution system (PDS) shops as partial wages because they did not possess the needed ration cards.

2. Micro-development planning as part of social audit

A voluntary development organization Samarthan and PRIA (Society for Participatory Research in Asia) collaborated in a participatory micro-planning exercise with local officials, panchayat members, members of different castes, etc. The process was a way to bring resources to the local community and to increase its involvement in Gram Sabha meetings which took place four times a year.

This led to the identification of several goals. One was to construct a drain. Inspired by the participatory local planning process, the community contributed half the cost of the drain (Rs 50 000). Those who could not give money offered their labour. The rest of the money came from the district office and was mobilized by the Gram Panchayat and its pro-active woman president, the Sarpanch.

Every member of the Gram Sabha developed a sense of ownership of the project. The Gram Sabha monitors the work. Gram Panchayat representatives also hold regular ward-level meetings. The relationship between people and their local representatives developed quickly into one of mutual support.

Independent Regulatory Authorities

Despite protests about India being a federation with powers allocated between the Union, states and local authorities, the reality is much different. Every attempt to delegate decision-making to lower levels, has been overcome by politicians and the bureaucracy. The Constitution was amended to give powers to panchayats, but financial decisions remain mostly with the state governments. Municipal authorities fare even worse as there are many agencies, no single coordinating authority, and usually a minister for the biggest metropolitan city. Decisions are with him and the chief minister and these neither reflect coordination nor a careful consideration.

The intention behind creating independent regulatory commissions was to introduce transparency in government decisions. As economy grew, many resources under government ownership became extremely valuable. Land was one; others included coal, electricity, telecommunications spectrum, petroleum and natural gas, stock markets, pensions funds and their governance, airport facilities, etc.

The economic reforms of 1991 were expected to increase private domestic and foreign investment. Decisions related to terms for investment, tariffs, licensing, etc, were to be made transparent. Consultation and full disclosure was to be the rule. Legislation creating statutory regulatory commissions were passed during this time.

There are over 60 regulatory bodies at central and state level, including bodies created by the Constitution like CAG. Moreover, governments have transferred some of their regulatory powers like licensing, tariff setting, ensuring competitive markets, to these regulatory agencies created by statute with an intention to recognise the technical nature of the subject under regulation, and provide clarity and transparency since large sums of money are involved. For regulatory bodies; jurisdiction, extent of their powers, the manner of exercising them, penal powers, etc, are laid down by the statutes that created them. But they are quite dissimilar in functioning due to the jurisdiction they operate in.

None of the agencies is a model for others, as each is created by the concerned ministry. For instance, TRAI is a recommendatory body, whereas the electricity commissions are still trying to get authority over their forward markets. Besides, penal powers for non-compliance are weak in most cases except SEBI and the Competition Commission. Some of the commissions have appellate tribunals over them, while appeals from others go directly to the High Courts.

There is little information on comparative powers and performance. Nor is there any attempt to study whether different commissions follow a common approach on similar issues.

In addition to statutory bodies, legislatures have given charters to self-regulatory bodies in select areas like sports. There are over 24 sports bodies like IOA, AILTA, BCCI, etc. There are also some professions that have self-regulatory powers over their members in relation to their profession. For instance, MCI (medical education); ICAI (accounting), ICWA (costing), Institute of Architects, Bar Council of India, etc.

It is a generally accepted notion, that self-regulated regulators do not perform all their functions satisfactorily. There are allegations of malfeasance against almost all of them. The professional ones (like ICAI or MCI) are not known for stringent actions against members flouting the norms. The sports organisations, on the other hand, tend to have people running them for their entire life and there are doubts about their financial integrity.

The statutory regulators appointed by the government also do not enjoy an infallible position. In the case of electricity, telecommunications, competition, securities, the appeals against the orders of the concerned commissions are to Appellate Tribunals, and not directly to the High Courts. This has often led to delays and the dilution of the original intent of the Commission. This is especially the case with competition where the Commission had received far stronger penal powers than other regulatory bodies. Its severe punishments on erring enterprises in violation of the law were diluted by the Competition Appellate Tribunal.

The Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) has been similar in its functioning, though not to the same extent. TRAI, on the contrary, can be overruled by the ministry since it is a recommendatory body. Government departments in the regulated sectors have not diminished and they continue to influence most regulatory bodies.

In many instances, the government departments especially in state governments, get the regulatory commission to act at the behest of the government, and not independently. One reason for this is the selection process of Chairman and members of the regulatory bodies. The selection committees specified in the legislation are invariably composed of administrators, many from the concerned ministry, invariably after retirement, and in some cases out of the same ministry whose sector they are to regulate. These are obnoxious practices that are against the original intent of statutory independent regulation. Such appointees mostly bring to the regulatory assignments, the baggage of

their administrative mindsets, the procedures and rules that go with them, and an ingrained culture of subservience to the government. They have little commercial or management attitudes and knowledge.

Thus, no state electricity regulatory commission has ever objected to the free power given to agriculture and other select consumers. These loss making supplies have been met by cross-subsidies, i.e., higher tariffs to other consumers which has led to wrong cropping patterns, depletion of ground water and growing salinity of land.

Another instance: The Electricity Act mandates open access in order to optimise the use of available electricity in the country. State governments prefer to make supply from local electricity generators. No regulatory commission has protested or denied the prevention of such open access of electricity between states.

With most regulatory bodies, the staff is on deputation from other departments of the government. They do not regard themselves as having a career in regulation. Few if any, rise to become members or chairmen of these bodies.

There are regulatory bodies, like RBI and Sebi, that have had much impact on the economy, but most are content with submission to the government's desires.

So, has the statutory regulatory process been successful? It has not done what was expected from it, namely create transparency and clarity in licensing, tariff setting, etc. This is mainly due to the key positions in these bodies becoming post-retirement perquisites for retiring bureaucrats and government servants resulting in little independence, courage or knowledge in regulating the concerned sectors. They largely operate as just another government layer.

Special benches in the High Courts, can certainly replace the appellate tribunals as they would focus on law and leave ascertaining facts to the Commissions.

Transparent regulators are a must for evolution of mature markets. But political forces have distorted this process. Recently, one of the CEOs in the meeting of 200 young entrepreneurs organised by NITI Aayog, lamented to the Prime Minister about regulatory obstruction to growth and development of the sector. Liberalisation of economies, opening up of sectors, unleashing of market forces and withdrawal of direct intervention gave birth to regulations, regulators and regulatory regimes. ***The economists described it as the transition of the government's role from positive intervention to arm's length superintendence.***

The manner in which the regulatory state has performed its duties is a moot issue. There have been various pulls and pressures, as well as a lack of transparency and accountability of the regulators concerned. This anomaly needs to be probed. But first the background.

Populism dents regulation

In 1991 India shifted gears and transited from 'command' to 'market driven' economy. The license and permit raj have been slowly yet steadily dismantled in sector after sector

and government's positive interventions are being replaced, albeit partially, by market forces of demand and supply.

In fact, in some of the industrial sectors, government owned institutions continue to operate in competition with private sector organisations, including other State undertakings. The examples in this regard are petroleum, banking and non-life insurance industries.

Over a period of time number of regulatory bodies, ranging from RBI, SEBI, IRDA, PFRDA to TRAI, electricity regulators, CCI, FDA have sprang up. There is a proposal to create a regulator for the aviation and rail traffic business as well; and many more may follow.

These regulators have been empowered to set the policy agenda, outline regulations, punish non-compliance and garner resources to manage their affairs. The policy direction pursued by every regulator has to support the development of the market of the allocated jurisdiction.

However, in Indian democracy, social and political populism often overtake the economic agenda. This casts a shadow on regulation. Whenever major market misconduct unfolds, the politicians and eventually the legislature go into overdrive to framing restrictive policies and denouncing the regulators and regulatory bodies; micro finance is one such example.

Economic agents have the propensity to discover kinks and unfairly profit from it.. Harshad Mehta and Ketan Parikh scams are instances of capital market upheavals adversely affecting the India's economic growth. Such events happen in every domain and often and have to be dealt with pragmatically. However, the politicisation of such events has made the regulators in India overcautious. The gradualism of the RBI is believed to have its origins in the Harshad Mehta scam.

Some regulatory issues

Apart from populist pressures, there are three areas of regulatory concern. First, the selection of non-experts to lead the regulatory bodies and instinct of protecting their skin has led to regulatory frames being over crowded by protective approaches. In the process, development of the mature, well regulated markets takes a serious beating.

Second, the review mechanism of the functioning of the regulatory bodies, including under the aegis of parliamentary committees is not very robust. It does not include the role of the regulators in the development of the market, in particular. In fact, even a constructive criticism of the policy approaches of one of the regulators is not viewed kindly. The complaint of the young CEO to the Prime Minister may not be wholly unjustified.

Third, a liberalised marketplace is influenced by a host of factors emerging out of the social, political and economic environment. The inventions and innovations in the

sector as also in the society at large influence the direction of the market. Designing regulatory interventions that can effectively control risks and deal with the pattern of non-compliance while balancing the development of the market and protecting the interest of innovators is a challenging task.

The divergent interests of the participants create fissures in the objectivity of the regulator. The regulatory principles of alacrity, informed approach (research), appropriate tool selection, democracy, transparency and accountability thus assume foremost significance.

Accountability, transparency

It's time that the Government institutionalises the review mechanism of the functioning of the regulatory bodies. Their track record needs to be assessed in areas such as regulating the market, protecting the interest of investors and more particularly development of the market. It is also important to review the accountability frames of the regulatory bodies; assessed from: (a) giving reasons for decisions, (b) exposure to public scrutiny, (c) possibility of independent review and (d) cost benefit analysis.

The review of the functioning of the regulatory bodies must be a transparent process. In some of the countries like the United States, the review of the functioning of the regulatory bodies including US Fed is televised and objectives of the directions of the regulatory regime expressly stated.

A regulatory state was conceived as a fast and flexible alternative to the cumbersome and bureaucratic frames of the replaced era. However, questions about the democratic governance and accountability of regulators, in particular, are being raised across geographies, including in India because substantial power to make laws has shifted from elected representatives to unelected technocrats.

There is an urgent need to review the democracy as well as the accountability so as to obviate 'regulatory capture', 'regulatory inflation' and establish the 'legitimacy' of the regulatory state. A half way house of just creating independent regulatory regimes does not deliver optimal benefits to the economy of the country; inefficacious regulation can make a sector (globally) uncompetitive.

The Government should consider appointing a high-level task force immediately to delve deep into these issues and recommend a path to be pursued so that the shift to arm's length superintendence becomes an effective facilitator.

It would be better if all the commissions have a uniform structure and if they can follow each others' orders to ensure that there is a body of regulatory law and precedents that can enrich the whole business of regulation.

E-governance and information technology

E-Governance is the public sector's use of information and communication technologies with the aim of improving information and service delivery, encouraging citizen participation in the decision-making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective.

India is currently experiencing an information explosion, thanks to the dramatic advance of Information Technology which is sure to affect various aspects of life, including Public Administration. The very concepts of structure and processes of management are already undergoing significant changes under the impact of IT. More significant, however, will be its impact on administrative culture. The fantastic advances made every day in IT have been a culture shock to the typical Indian administrator in the 1990s, notwithstanding the fact that there is roughly a gap of quarter of a century or so between the first appearance of some technological innovations in the West and its adoption in India. The government and administration in India began to think seriously for adopting IT only in the 1990s after accepting the policy of liberalisation.

Today with the help of the wireless Internet, any information can be reached anywhere in the world within minutes.

IT and Administrative Culture

Each culture uses its own technology and each technological revolution brings forth its own culture. The interface between technology and culture is complex and interesting.

The major impact of IT on the economic sectors of the developing countries is as follows;

- (1) A more dynamic economic and social fabric is made possible by networking and flexibility, which are factors in mobility and innovation.
- (2) For business, ICTs represent an importance source of growth potential, with falling transaction costs and positive externalities that are a result of shared services and shorter channels.
- (3) Quality of life improvements with increased freedom in managing constraints of time and place of work.
- (4) The development and acceleration of exchanges which facilitate mutual enrichment in terms of know-how and expertise.
- (5) The creation and reinforcement of growth poles that generate added value in telecommunication and IT and in other sectors such as transport, finance, retail, education, health care and media.

- (6) Creation of new high-value jobs, in particular with the emergence of new professions and expertise in as yet untapped areas.

IT and Good Governance

Public Administration, in general, and governance, in particular, is at crossroads and so are governmental organisations in India. Process of governance cannot remain unaffected by powerful winds of change and the trust of IT revolution sweeping the globe.

The agenda items of good governance are as follows;

- (1) Enhancing effective and efficient administration;
- (2) Improving quality of life of citizens;
- (3) Establishing legitimacy and credibility of institutions;
- (4) Making administration response, citizen friendly, and citizen caring;
- (5) Ensuring accountability;
- (6) Securing freedom of information and expression.
- (7) Reducing cost of governance;
- (8) Making every department result-oriented;
- (9) Improving quality of public services;
- (10) Improving productivity of employees;
- (11) Eradication of corruption to re-establish credibility of government by ensuring integrity of individuals;
- (12) Use of IT-based services to de-mystify procedures and improve the citizen-government interface.

Information Technology is of great help in achieving the objectives of Good Governance. The areas of application of IT are as follows:

- (1) **Urban Services:** Development of on-line integrated information and monitoring system for delivery, accounting compliance, and payment for services—like water supply, electricity, telephones etc. Citizens in the urban areas should be able to obtain and submit electronically all forms for any service or clearance from the government. It should be possible for them to pay their bills electronically.
- (2) **Compliance and Payment of Taxes:** It should be possible for a citizen to pay taxes and duties of all kinds electronically. Filing of returns on account of income tax, sales tax, house tax, etc. need to be facilitated through the use of IT. This would reduce, if not eliminate, the need for a personal contact with the government officials and the consequential manipulation.
- (3) **Filing of Complaints:** A common citizen feels harassed if he is required to visit a Police Station to lodge a complaint or a FIR against any violation of law. Things would be different if such complaints can be lodged electronically.

(4) **Managing Traffic on Roads:** Traffic violations and alleged attendant corruption/payoffs represent some of the most glaring forms of bad governance. A hand-held electronic card reader-cum-reader-cum-recorder along with electronic speed sensors should do the trick of punishing the offenders of traffic laws.

(5) **Development Projects:** Application of IT based models for planning and execution of development projects at the national, state, district, and village levels would help ensure significant achievements with minimum time and cost over-runs. Benefit to rural masses would be tremendous through increased production, productivity, and marked access.

Appointment and Transfer of Personnel

It is possible to use IT to ensure transparency and complete objectivity in appointment, posting and transfer of employees. Large scale appointments for skills oriented jobs can be fully automated. In spite of availability of transfer guidelines issued by a department from time to time, there is ample scope for using 'discretion' or 'judgement' for favouring any applicant. It is possible through the development of a computerised system to 'generate' a priority list for transfers on the basis of a 'weighted' score computed as per the transfer guidelines. The system can identify applicants who are eligible for transfer and then put them in order of priority through weighted score. Though complete transparency and strict objectivity can be ensured by the computerised system by 'numerating' the weights and scores in the transfer guidelines, there would be no scope for 'compassion' or 'other considerations'.

Improving Citizen-Government Interface

There are a large number of areas representing interface between IT and governance. Highly professional systems for communication, information and control can be successfully designed and implemented for benefit of the society. Some of them are in areas like:

Integration of passport, driving licence, ration card, income tax identification, voter identification, etc. into an electronic (SMART) CARD that can serve the purpose of being a citizen card.

- Registration of Vehicles.
- Monitoring of traffic violations through the SMART card.
- Public Distribution System.
- Immigration information and monitoring.
- Management of Public Health.
- Water and power supply.
- Property Taxes.
- Monitoring of primary education.

Importance of Training in IT for good governance

There is urgent need for imparting high quality, professional level, training for electronic governance. The training has to be imparted to the working government officials. In addition to series of short-term awareness and skill oriented courses, a programme on e-governance at the masters' level of 12 months duration on a full-time basis would be required for government officials. The focus should be on IT applications in management of public systems.

Important Features of IT Enabled Governance

Investment on IT products and services has to be treated not as expense or cost saving, but investment for future growth. It is an investment in the vision for the future. It should provide open access to citizens with data owned by public as much as by the government. Action in this regard will mean a shift of course as follows:

From	To
Unwieldy paper files with torn covers	Computer based files
Frayed corners and with pins sticking Out	
Hierarchical authority	Networked power
Wielding power through hiding information	Empowerment through sharing information.
Expenditure orientation.	Performance orientation.
Individualistic.	Organisational.
Compliance/Inspection orientation	Achievement Orientation.
Batch processing.	On-line processing.
Delayed Access.	Instant Access
Delayed Response	Prompt Response
Repeated Manual Data Entry.	EDI
More time for routine repetitive work.	More time for creative work
Fear of unknown.	It savvy
Status quo.	Continuous improvement.

Issues relating to Poverty and Hunger

What is poverty, and how is it measured?

Poverty can be defined as a condition in which an individual or household lacks the financial resources to afford a basic minimum standard of living. Economists and policymakers estimate “absolute” poverty as the shortfall in consumption expenditure from a threshold called the “poverty line”. The official poverty line is the expenditure incurred to obtain the goods in a “poverty line basket” (PLB). Poverty can be measured in terms of the number of people living below this line (with the incidence of poverty expressed as the head count ratio). The “depth” of poverty indicates how far the poor are below the poverty line.

Six official committees have so far estimated the number of people living in poverty in India — the working group of 1962; V N Dandekar and N Rath in 1971; Y K Alagh in 1979; D T Lakdawala in 1993; Suresh Tendulkar in 2009; and C Rangarajan in 2014. The government did not take a call on the report of the Rangarajan Committee; therefore, poverty is measured using the Tendulkar poverty line. As per this, 21.9% of people in India live below the poverty line.

What does the basket of goods include?

The PLB comprises goods and services considered essential to a basic minimum standard of living — food, clothing, rent, conveyance, and entertainment. The price of the food component can be estimated using calorie norms or nutrition targets. Until the 1990s, the calorie norms method was used — it was based on the minimum number of calories recommended by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) for a household of five members. However, this method does not consider the different food groups that are essential for health — this is why the Tendulkar Committee targeted nutritional outcomes.

The Lakdawala Committee assumed that health and education is provided by the state — therefore, expenditure on these items was excluded from the consumption basket it proposed. Since expenditure on health and education rose significantly in the 1990s, the Tendulkar Committee included them in the basket. As a result of revisions to the basket and other changes in the method of estimation, the percentage of people living below the poverty line in 1993-94 rose from 35.97% to 45.3%.

Why are poverty numbers important?

The PLB has been the subject of much debate. The 1962 group did not consider age and gender-specific calorie requirements. Expenditure on health and education were not considered until the Tendulkar Committee — which was criticized for setting the poverty line at just Rs 32 per capita per day in urban India (and at Rs 27 in rural India). And the Rangarajan Commission was criticized for selecting the food component arbitrarily — the emphasis on food as a source of nutrition overlooks the contribution of sanitation, healthcare, access to clean water, and prevalence of pollutants.

Poverty numbers matter because central schemes like Antyodaya Anna Yojana (which provides subsidised foodgrains to households living below the poverty line) and Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (health insurance for BPL households) use the definition of poverty given by the NITI Aayog or the erstwhile Planning Commission. The Centre allocates funds for these schemes to states based on the numbers of their poor. Errors of exclusion can deprive eligible households of benefits.

In what other ways can poverty be estimated?

In 2011, Oxford University researchers Sabina Alkire and James Foster devised the multidimensional poverty index (MPI) to capture poverty using 10 indicators: nutrition, child mortality, years of schooling, school attendance, ownership of assets, and access to proper house, electricity, drinking water, sanitation, and clean cooking fuel. Poverty is measured in terms of deprivation in at least a third of these indicators. In 2015-16, 369.546 million (nearly 37 crore) Indians were estimated to meet the deprivation cut-off for three or more of the 10 indicators.

While the overall headcount multidimensional poverty ratio in 2015-16 was 27.9%, the number was 36.8% for rural and 9.2% for urban India. There were wide variations across states — poverty was the highest for Bihar (52.5%), followed by Jharkhand (46.5%), Madhya Pradesh (41.1%), and Uttar Pradesh (40.8%). It was the lowest for Kerala (1.1%), Delhi (4.2%), Punjab (6.1%), Tamil Nadu (7.3%) and Himachal Pradesh (8.1%).

The MPI is a more comprehensive measure of poverty because it includes components that capture the standard of living more effectively. However, uses “outcomes” rather than expenditure — the presence of an undernourished person in the household will result in it being classified as “poor”, regardless of the expenditure on nutritious food.

So what is the current “level” of poverty in India?

The National Statistical Office (NSO) Report on Household Consumer Expenditure for 2017-18 was junked in 2019 — so there are no data to update India’s poverty figures. Even the MPI report published by Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative used data from the fourth round of the National Family Health Survey, figures for which are available only until 2015-16.

Social scientist S Subramanian used data from a leaked version of the consumer expenditure data to conclude that the incidence of poverty in India increased from 31.15% to 35.1% between 2011-12 and 2017-18. The absolute number of poor people

also increased from 270 million to 322.22 million over the same period, which translates to 52 million more poor people in six years.

POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES

Eradication of poverty remains a major challenge of planned economic development. Experiences of different states with economic growth and poverty reduction have been so varied that it is difficult to offer any general policy prescription. There are states that followed the path of high agricultural growth and succeeded in reducing poverty (Punjab and Haryana) and states that focused on human resource development and reduced poverty (Kerala).

There have been states that implemented land reforms with vigour, empowered the panchayats, mobilised the poor and implemented poverty-alleviation programmes effectively (West Bengal) and states that brought about reduction in poverty by direct public intervention in the form of public distribution of foodgrains (Andhra Pradesh).

2. Poverty had declined substantially in 1980s. However, recent estimates suggest that projections on reduction of proportion and number of people below poverty line made in the Ninth Plan have not been realised in the first two years of the plan period. While this calls for a much more rigorous analysis, the possible factors that might have contributed to this could be: $\frac{3}{4}$ fiscal crisis faced by State Governments resulting in lower spending on social sectors, $\frac{3}{4}$ slowing down of and less dispersed agricultural growth, especially foodgrains, $\frac{3}{4}$ decline in employment intensity in the agricultural sector with a small increase in real wages, $\frac{3}{4}$ failure of Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) to reach the poorest in northern and eastern states, $\frac{3}{4}$ a negligible expansion in the non-farm sector, and $\frac{3}{4}$ indifferent functioning of the poverty alleviation and watershed development schemes .

3. Given the enormity and complexity of the task, the Ninth Five Year Plan envisaged a multi-pronged approach. Besides recognising the role of high economic growth in tackling poverty, the strategy comprised creation of entitlements (through self-employment and wage-employment schemes, food security and social security) and building up of capabilities (through basic minimum services like education, health and housing). The issues of governance also engaged the attention of the Plan, which envisaged greater participation of the Panchayati Raj Institutions as the most effective delivery mechanism for poverty reduction. This chapter discusses the effectiveness of programmes of the Ministry of Rural Development in alleviating poverty. Integrated Rural Development Programme

4. The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was started in 1980-81 in all blocks of the country and continued as a major self-employment scheme till April 1, 1999. Then, it was restructured as the Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana 206 (SGSY) which aimed at self-employment of the rural poor. The objective will be achieved through acquisition of productive assets or appropriate skills that would generate an additional income on a sustained basis to enable them to cross poverty line. Rural poor families have remained constant in number at 55 million in the last 20 years despite high growth and high investment in IRDP and wage-giving programmes. Since

the inception of the programme till 1998-99, 53.50 million families have been covered under IRDP at an expenditure of Rs.13,700 crore. During first two years of the Ninth Plan (1997-98 and 1998-99), about 3.37 million families are reported to have been covered of which 46 per cent were Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes and 35 per cent women. The total investment during this period has been Rs.6,431 crore including a subsidy of Rs 2,266 crore.

5. IRDP has been extensively evaluated by researchers, scholars, various national institutions and international organisations. They have all pointed out several conceptual and administrative problems with it. IRDP has several allied programmes like Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM), Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA), Ganga Kalyan Yojana (GKY), Million Wells Scheme (MWS) and Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans (SITRA). Together, they presented a matrix of multiple programmes without desired linkages. These were implemented as separate programmes without keeping in mind the overall objective of generating sustainable incomes. For instance, only 3 per cent of IRDP beneficiaries received training under TRYSEM and only 23 per cent of those trained thus were assisted under IRDP. 6. Not only are there no linkages between different programmes, there has been lack of coordination with other departments as well. IRDP and the allied ones are not sufficiently enmeshed in the overall strategy of sustainable agricultural development or rural industrialisation strategy or with the resource-base of the area. In fact very few loans have been given for buying land. This absence of integration together with lack of technological and institutional capabilities puts a question mark on the very strategy and design of the programmes.

7. The average investment per family remained at sub-critical levels, too inadequate to generate income of Rs.2,000 per family per month as the programmes had set out to do. Such investment at the beginning of the Eighth Plan was Rs.7,889. Even the investment at the beginning of Ninth Plan of Rs.16,753 was not much higher in real terms. Such low per-family investment in the face of inflationary trends and rising cost of assets cannot finance viable projects to offer adequate incomes on a sustained basis.

8. The management of such inherently unviable projects was in the hands of often illiterate and unskilled beneficiaries with little or no past experience of managing an enterprise. There was, however, an implicit assumption that the prospective beneficiaries possessed information and skills to choose viable options, had access to raw materials and were aware of nature of the product and factor markets. This was not the case. IRDP did not take into account the disabilities from which the poor suffer, notably their exclusion from the community decision-making. As a result, many beneficiaries could not retain the asset for long; for some who did retain it the income generated was not enough to cross the poverty line. On the contrary, where infrastructure was in place and markets were well developed, IRDP met with greater success. These were the regions where many people even without the subsidy would have taken to entrepreneurial activities. 207 9. The delivery of credit by banks has also been a constraint. The fear of default meant that banks lent to the better-off applicants who could make their projects work, or to the unscrupulous who would pocket the

subsidy element and repay the loan in connivance with the bank. Furthermore, the bureaucratic procedures were also too complex and beyond the comprehension of beneficiaries.

10. Lack of imagination and planning led to overcrowding of lending for certain projects. For quite sometime, IRDP was seen as a scheme for distributing milch animals without any concern whether so much of feed and fodder and veterinary care would be available or not and whether there was any demand or market for the products. As a result, the same cattle changed hands several times with the involvement of banks, block officials and the beneficiaries in collecting the subsidy. Situation has changed; now there is greater emphasis on secondary and tertiary sector activities. However, the profitable activities in these sectors get saturated very fast as a result of over-lending. The basic problems of lack of demand analysis and availability of inputs remain.

11. IRDP has been a poorly targeted programme notwithstanding the elaborate criteria of identification of 'below poverty line (BPL)' families by the Gram Panchayat. Instances of non-poor getting selected and the poor being left out have not been infrequent.

12. Leakages, misappropriation of funds, violation of programme guidelines, selection of the non-poor as target group, absence of proper maintenance of accounts and poor quality of assets – all these have been documented in various studies. IRDP Funds Go to Non-poor Reports of corruption and payoffs to middlemen were pervasive, and few households claimed to have utilized loans for productive purposes. For instance, a review of the experience of 394 poor households in Bankura District in West Bengal found various kinds of misconduct under IRDP that penalized the target group. Banks in the sample improperly deducted 10 percent of the loan as charges, and most beneficiaries were told or perceived that they did not have to repay the loan portion. Additionally, middlemen "captured" subsidies of credit-based anti-poverty programmes, effectively increasing the cost of such transactions. A sampling of 312 "weak" borrowers in Tamil Nadu showed "incidental expenses" and "speed/quick or push money" amounting to Rs.21 for every Rs.100 of subsidy. About two-thirds of this sample also reported "working" for the subsidy and producing "quick money" in addition to covering normal expenses. Such "fixed" transaction costs, even if legitimate, were not only high but inherently regressive as well. In another case study (Gangajalghati and Ranibandh), almost no IRDP beneficiary satisfied the eligibility criteria. Their participation in the programme came about through political interference; lack of proper information systems and decisions by some bank officials to ignore poor repayment records, among other reasons. Once the programme participants obtained the loan in the form of goats, the animals were sold and the proceeds used for other purposes. Further, the shortage of goats in the area was such that the planned number of goat loans could not be met. Other schemes like blacksmithing and carpentry faced such difficulties as scant supplies of raw materials and absence of proper marketing facilities. Source : Rural Finance Report, World Bank, 1998. 208

13. A disturbing feature of IRDP in several states has been the rising indebtedness of its beneficiaries. In many cases, the beneficiaries have had to borrow money at much higher interest to repay the IRDP loan and avoid legal action. This unintended outcome of IRDP has raised serious doubts about the projects' ability to lift the beneficiary above the poverty line.

14. The rise in indebtedness has two reasons. Firstly, the programme overlooks consumption requirements of the beneficiaries; this leads to diversion of the project loan for consumption needs. Secondly, once micro-enterprises are established there is no mechanism to look at how these enterprises tackle problems of marketing or working capital. As a result, many of these units become unviable and leave the beneficiary in debt.

15. The scope of poverty reduction through IRDP is limited both by debt-capacity of the poor and by the high cost of appraising, monitoring and enforcing small loan agreements. The first limitation is in theory offset by subsidy, but it attracts rich borrowers to the scheme and thus raises political and administrative problems. The subsidy element has led to large scale corruption, it is reported, on the part of lower level functionaries (who certify that beneficiaries are below the poverty line), by bank staff and by borrowers themselves. Some of the borrowers sell off their assets and pocket the subsidy and others borrow by proxy for target group borrowers.

16. Large numbers of milch animals are often bought for beneficiaries at the same time in cattle fairs, pushing up their price. The difference in the price and quality of financed assets over their market price, along with cost of time, out-of-pocket expenses and payments to middlemen raises transaction cost to the borrower by an estimated 20 per cent. Thus, although the interest rate on bank loans under the programme is 12 per cent, the effective rate is between 30 per cent and 35 percent. This entirely nullifies benefits of average subsidy amount of one-third.

17. Failure by the poor to use assets profitably stems from several factors, of which control over markets is an important factor. The poor are not able to secure economies of scale because of indivisibilities in marketing costs and in insurance opportunities. Low price received by the poor for their products is also because of interlocked output and capital markets, lack of value addition technologies, poor organisational base and at times government policies which adversely affect the poor. These problems need to be addressed by making concerted efforts to involve all stakeholders including nongovernmental organizations.

18. Most poor people operate in very limited segments of highly segmented product and labour markets, and therefore the demand for their products gets saturated fast. The programme had better success in infrastructure-rich regions and for economically better-off people.

19. On the whole, the basic concept of IRDP remains flawed. The massive amount spent on subsidies which have by and large not accrued to beneficiaries would be much better

spent on watershed development, rural infrastructure and social security. Growth in first two of these is an essential concomitant of credit and the third an alternative to credit for those who for reasons of old age or disability have few if any productive micro-enterprise opportunities.

20. Second, IRDP suffers from the basic misconception that provision of credit is one-time event rather than a continuing relationship between lender and borrower. It is unrealistic to expect the larger share of borrowers to “graduate” just on the basis of an “injection” of credit (the medical terminology is significant). Unlike IRDP, in Gramin Bank, most loanees start with small loans and as the relationship with it improves, the Bank hands out more loan to the same person – recovery oft goes hand in hand with fresh loans. This practice also improves capability of the poor to utilise the loan profitably. His stake in repayment becomes higher.

21. Third, there is still an under-emphasis on activities which require no fixed assets such as trading, service and even simple processing activities. Unlike India, other large micro-enterprise programmes in Bangladesh, the Philippines and Nepal finance a much larger component of petty trading and service activities. Such mix of activities suitable to the poorest of the poor is discouraged in India because of an obsession with asset formation. The Indian practice has restricted the type of livelihood activities that can be financed (milch animals, for instance) making these overcrowded. . Instead of responding to a demand-led pattern of lending opportunities, banks are still restricted to a list of “approved” activities. On the demand side, certain profitable enterprises quickly saturate because of too many loans. In U.P. a bank gave 20 loans for setting up shops in a village of 143 households.

22. Fourth, IRDP totally neglects savings on the mistaken belief that the poor cannot save at all. The distinction by banks between acceptable use of credit for productive purposes and its unacceptable use in consumption is artificial one in the context of poverty. About two-thirds of the borrowing of the Indian poor is for consumption purposes (all of it from the informal sector) of which three-quarters is for illnesses and household needs in the lean season. In the absence of any system for encouraging even minuscule savings a great deal of IRDP credit gets diverted to emergency consumption needs.

23. Fifth, IRDP does not look into problems of already established microenterprises. How can one enthuse the rural poor to become tailors, weavers, shopkeepers, or cattle owners if problems faced by owners of those existing assets are ignored? Rather than give subsidy to new enterprises, it would be far better to help the existing units tackle their problems, be they in design, marketing or working capital.

24. Lastly, IRDP totally lacks “social intermediation,” a process by which poor borrowers are encouraged to organize themselves into groups, are given awareness training on the importance of regular savings and credit discipline and are instilled a sense of self-confidence. This function is conducted by the bank itself in several countries – as Grameen Bank and some co-operative banks do in India -- and by intermediating Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs). In India the self-help group

(SHG) movement is seeking to provide social intermediation through the Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK) and Women's Development Corporations, though they are still small compared to IRDP.

25. While some poor may have made moderate gains, not more than one in five have succeeded in crossing the poverty line as a direct result of IRDP. Although 5 million cattle were distributed during the Sixth Plan period, this did not get reflected in cattle census numbers. Little attention has been paid to main issues in cattle programme: adequate protection from inclement weather, poor access to grazing lands and veterinary services. These problems can be minimized by group lending which will raise debt-capacity and cut transaction costs. Intermediation by voluntary agencies may also help.

26. Despite attempts to expand public participation in identification of beneficiaries, IRDP remains a highly bureaucratic programme. Benefits could be made far more cost-effective by reforming regular credit delivery system on the one hand and by strengthening credit reception systems through the SHG movement on the other.

27. IRDP has expanded on a scale which has outstripped the capacity of government and banks to implement it. The administrative machinery to monitor local physical investment opportunities against which credit disbursement targets can be fixed simply does not exist. There is consequently over-investment and recycling of dairy animals. Inadequate appraisal and reported political interference contribute to poor recovery and high rates of default. To lift profitability of rural banking in India, there have been suggestions that the power over loan disbursement vest in local banks, free from influence by government and politicians.

28. Because of a distortion of objectives, IRDP's lending policy has tended to be driven by availability of subsidised funds rather than any effective demand for credit. Indicators for monitoring are based on target; they are not achievement-based. In the event, retention and profitability of assets purchased are never monitored.

One of IRDP's facilitating components, TRYSEM was aimed at providing basic technical and entrepreneurial skills to the rural poor in the age group of 18-35 years to take up income-generating activities. The concurrent evaluation of IRDP (1992-93) showed that less than 4 per cent of beneficiaries received training under TRYSEM. The rural youth so trained were only interested in the stipends; they had not used the knowledge gained under the programme for furthering self-employment prospects. TRYSEM had a weak link with the overall strategy for self-employment in rural areas and with industrial policy. The training was not related to capacity or aptitude of trainees nor to demand for the respective skill. It was impossible for trained rural youth to run a self-employment enterprise, given the poor technological base and uncertainty over availability of credit. 30. Launched in 1992, SITRA was a sub-scheme of IRDP in selected districts but was later extended to all the districts of the country. Under this scheme, a variety of artisans were supplied with kit of improved hand-tools. It was all within a financial ceiling of Rs.2,000, of which the artisans had to pay 10 per cent and the rest was subsidy from the Central Government. Reports indicate that the scheme has

been well received by rural artisans and they are able to raise their income levels by use of improved tools.

Self-Help Movement in Andhra Pradesh Andhra Pradesh has taken up empowerment of women under DWCRA. The programme is in the nature of a mass movement by Self Help Groups (SHGs) through thrift and savings and promises to be a potent tool to tackle socio-economic poverty. Here is an opportunity for the women to participate in other programmes like family welfare as well and improve educational and nutritional status of their children. The programme creates in them an awareness about environment and public health and hygiene. There are 79,000 women-formed SHGs covering about 11.25 lakh of them. A 1997-98 survey by DWCRA/SHGs spoke of the programme's positive impact on the size of the family and number of children going to school. Not just an allied programme of IRDP, DWCRA in Andhra Pradesh is shaping as a vehicle by which women are encouraged to unleash their inherent potential in the manner they did during the famous antiarrack movement – but this time to battle for socio-economic development.

A mass savings movement (Podupulaxmi) was launched among women and this has come to give every DWCRA member higher income than non-members. One of several success stories told in a State Government document is of a group of landless women in Bathalapalli village (District Anantapur) who organised themselves into SHGs, raised bank loan and obtained subsidy through District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) to purchase land. The members created irrigation facility through a bore well from their savings fund. Now, they grow vegetables which yield for each family a monthly income of Rs 1,000-1,500, much improved quality of life and higher status in the society. Importantly, these SHGs have spread out their efforts into several social programmes covering literacy, health, nutrition and so on. Although DWCRA as a separate programme no longer exists as it got subsumed in SGSY with effect from 1st April 1999, the self-help movement has taken deep roots and works for better implementation of anti-poverty programmes in the state. (Source: DWCRA and Women's Empowerment: A Success Story of Self-Help Movement in Andhra Pradesh, Panchayati Raj and Rural Development Department, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Dec 1998)

31. DWCRA aimed at strengthening the gender component of IRDP. During the Eighth Plan, it benefited about 22.67 lakh women who were assisted at an expenditure of Rs.190.72 crore. DWCRA was directed at improving the living conditions of women and thereby of children by offering opportunities for self-employment and access to basic social services. It sought to encourage collective work in the form of group 213 activities that were known to work better and were more sustainable than the individual effort. In the Eighth Plan, DWCRA received a fillip with the government taking several initiatives to strengthen the programme. Some States like Andhra Pradesh (see Box 3), Kerala, Tripura and Gujarat performed very well contrast to most others. The range of activity pursued by DWCRA groups was fairly diverse. However, several groups became defunct over time due to their improper selection, lack of homogeneity among the group members, selection of non-viable activities, poor backward and forward

linkages, lack of institutional financial support and professional approach and inadequacy of staff and their insufficient training and motivation. Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)

32. IRDP and allied programmes such as TRYSEM, DWCRA, SITRA & GKY along with MWS were merged into a single programme under Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana w.e.f. April, 1999. The SGSY is a holistic programme and aims at covering all aspects of self-employment, namely, organisation of rural poor, training, participatory approach to planning of self-employment ventures and provision of infrastructure facilities, technology, credit and marketing arrangements. The scheme is yet to be firmly grounded.

33. However, SGSY is still a credit-cum-subsidy programme and suffers from several of IRDP's ills (already listed above) which would have to be rectified as the micro-credit based activities pick up. Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY)

34. JRY was launched as Centrally Sponsored Scheme on 1st April, 1989 by merging National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP). Its main objective was generation of additional gainful employment for the unemployed and under-employed people in rural areas through the creation of rural economic infrastructure, community and social assets with the aim of improving the quality of life of the rural poor.

35. An important role was envisaged for the panchayats in JRY's implementation. The funds devolved to village panchayats, intermediate panchayats and district panchayats in the ratio of 70:15:15. The panchayats were responsible for planning and execution of projects under JRY. The programme has encouraged elected representatives to take interest in the selection and implementation of rural works.

36. Evaluation studies of the programme reveal that the employment generated per person was too inadequate to bring about any meaningful increase in the earnings of the beneficiaries. According to a concurrent evaluation carried out by the Ministry of Rural Development during June 1993-May 1994, roughly 11 days of employment was generated per person. At this level, the programme could not have made any significant impact on the income levels of the beneficiaries. It fell far short of the need to create enough employment in the rural areas to remove unemployment / underemployment.

37. The resources available were spread thinly so as to increase the coverage of areas/beneficiaries without any concern for duration of employment. Projects selected bore no relationship to the local needs or the agricultural development strategy. Neither the location of such works nor their timing was in accordance with the spirit of the programme. As a result, needless projects were taken up to avoid lapse of funds. A 214 study in Uttar Pradesh reports that the timing of works coincided with peak agricultural season and that the selection of works was not done in the gram sabha as required.

38. It appears that the villagers perceived this programme as an asset-building programme rather than as a wage-employment programme. Hence the entire focus was on creation of assets. The works undertaken involved high material cost and were not particularly labour intensive. Instances of violation of materials-labour norm prescribed under the programme were very common. In many areas these norms themselves were considered unrealistic, given the high cost of material.

39. Wage-employment programmes, by effectively intervening in the labour markets, were expected to exert upward pressure on the market wages. This could not happen because of insufficient employment provided by these programmes. However, in a study on poverty alleviation in Uttar Pradesh, the workers engaged under JRY confirmed that they received the stipulated minimum wage.

40. In flagrant violation of the guidelines, in many States projects were executed by contractors who sometimes hired outside labourers at lower wages. They also used trucks and tractors instead of more labour intensive approaches. Instances have also come to notice of projects shown to have been executed in a scheduled caste locality while in fact they had been carried out in upper class area.

41. Women have complained that employment was provided only for the Pradhan's personal supporters or workers willing to sign for higher wages than what was actually received. Such instances of violations abound.

42. The share of women in employment generated under the programme was only 17 per cent. Large number of works could not be completed in time on account of shortage of funds. There have also been instances of differential wages paid to male and female workers.

43. JRY and similar rural works programmes have tended to breed corruption. The fudging of muster rolls and of measurement books is very common resulting in huge loss of funds that could otherwise have been invested in building rural infrastructure. During a field visit to Nuapada (Orissa) it was reported that the documents were found fudged to cover excess payment involved in transporting the materials. There is need to penalise districts that prepare bogus muster rolls by blacklisting them and stopping further development assistance from the Ministry of Rural Development.

44. Notwithstanding some of the problems cited above, two positive aspects of the programme stand out. Firstly, the programme did succeed in creating durable community assets in rural areas. Although this was also not without problems like poor quality, inappropriate assets etc, the villagers generally appeared to have liked the idea of building up rural infrastructure especially when the assets were directly relevant to the community such as school building. Secondly, the programme led to empowerment of panchayats as the funds were placed at their disposal along with power to get the works executed through line departments. This was good training for panchayats in planning and execution of local works and financial management. Due to growing awareness among people about JRY and other programmes and pressure on elected

representatives, the panchayats are likely to implement these programmes more efficiently than bureaucrats. Fear of being voted out may make panchayat leaders more responsive to people's needs.

45. The empowerment of panchayats mentioned above is, however, limited by the fact that the panchayats are still dependent on the bureaucracy for technical appraisal 215 after completion of the project. Unless technical officials are also transferred to the panchayats along with funds and functions, such dependence on bureaucracy will continue and will not be in the interest of effective implementation of anti-poverty programmes. This process has started in some States as a part of the process of empowerment of Panchayats.

46. For greater transparency in the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and proper utilisation of funds, there is need to put in place a system of 'social audit'. Under this system, it should be ensured that all concerned have information about release of funds by DRDAs / Zilla Parishads to Blocks / Panchayats through press notes; similar information should be given to the general public by the implementing departments when they receive funds. Gram Panchayats must display on their notice board information about the works executed, their value, employment generated, payments made along with the list of beneficiaries. This information must be verified at a meeting of the Gram Sabha. Payments made by executing agencies for the materials should also be similarly made transparent to the public. . Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana

47. Under Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JGSY), an overriding priority was given to creating wage employment. An evaluation of JRY programme proposed that development of village infrastructure needed to be given greater focus. Accordingly, JRY has been strengthened and restructured as Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana w.e.f. 1st April, 1999.

48. JGSY aims at creation of demand-driven community village infrastructure that would enable rural poor to increase opportunities for sustained employment. Employment generation is a secondary objective. JGSY projects would be implemented by village panchayats with the approval of Gram Sabha. DRDA/Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samities will be responsible for overall guidance, coordination, supervision and monitoring of the projects. Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS)

49. Launched on Gandhi Jayanti Day (2nd October) in 1993, the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) was initially in operation in 1772 backward blocks. The blocks were identified in drought prone areas, deserts, tribal areas and hill region areas where the Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) was in operation. Gradually, EAS was extended to other blocks and by 1997-98 the scheme was being implemented in country's 5448 rural blocks in all.

50. As its primary objective, EAS is set to create additional wage employment opportunities during a period of acute shortage through manual work for the rural poor. The secondary objective is the creation of durable community, social and economic assets for sustained employment and development. Though open to all rural poor, the

programme is expected to attract only unskilled people below the poverty line because it offers only the minimum wages.

51. Though EAS funds were meant to be utilised as a last resort, things had not happened that way. An universal coverage triggered increased demand for funds from States beyond their available budgetary resources. Till 1st April 1999, the scheme was of a demand-driven nature and better-off states grabbed a lion's share of funds while the needy ones were left out. To rectify this, it was decided that with effect from 1st April 1999, the scheme would involve specific allocations to each state based on poverty.

52. As experience showed, employment provided under EAS was meagre. The Third Report of 1995 of the Comptroller and Auditor General stated that on an average each person was provided 18 days and 16 days of employment during 1994-95 and 1995-96 respectively.

53. According to a comprehensive evaluation by the Programme Evaluation Organisation (PEO) of Planning Commission in 14 States, EAS is being executed through contractors in most States in violation of central guidelines; the norm of 60:40 for wage and material is not maintained; genuine muster rolls are not being maintained by the Gram Panchayats. Family cards have not been issued; the system of registration of job seekers with Gram Panchayats is not in vogue; and even though Central allocation seems to have been made on the basis of minimum notional requirement, a vast majority of the Blocks did not get this allocation. This could be due to the inability of the States to contribute their matching share in the pooled fund for EAS.

54. As to EAS' impact, the study found that the estimated proportion of registered job seekers who actually got any employment was as low as 25 per cent in sample villages. The average number of days of employment per person per year was less than 53 as per official records. However, information gathered from the beneficiaries reveals that 69 per cent of them got less than 30 days of employment and another 17 per cent between 30 days and 50 days. The overall average for the sample States works out to 31 days.

55. Even in the matter of asset creation, the study finds that Central norms have not been followed. For example, none of the sample States has earmarked 40 per cent of funds for watershed development and 20 per cent for minor irrigation, link roads and buildings for schools and anganwadis. In Bihar, 69 per cent of EAS funds were allocated to activities like school buildings/anganwadis which are not labour-intensive. Similarly, in Gujarat, Haryana and West Bengal the unit cost of employment generation in school buildings / anganwadis is abnormally high (Rs 200 to Rs 300). It is difficult to justify allocation of funds to such activities under employment generation scheme. No inventory of assets was kept and it was difficult to know whether the asset created was community asset or private one. 56. A profile of the EAS beneficiaries shows that over 78 per cent belonged to daily wage earning class. To that extent the scheme appears to have been well-targeted. Although bulk of EAS beneficiaries were illiterate or below matriculation level, some skilled and semi-skilled workers were also among them. This

is further supported by the wide variation in wage rates paid in some states (for instance, Rs 25-100 in Rajasthan, Rs 22-150 in Tamil Nadu and Rs 20-80 in Madhya Pradesh). This could also be a reflection of the involvement of contractors who may have shown their employees as EAS beneficiaries.

57. The PEO study concludes that EAS has not realized its objectives of generation of sustained and gainful employment, supplementing the income of rural wage-earning class in agricultural lean seasons and improving the well-being of rural poor. With universalisation of EAS and without an element of assurance of employment of 100 days in a year as initially envisaged, there is practically no difference between JGSY and EAS except that the former is being implemented through PRIs and the latter by the administrative apparatus. There is, therefore, need to have another look at EAS.

58. Like other wage and self-employment programmes, EAS will have to be so designed that it provides short-term employment while it leads to improvement in productive capacity of individuals and areas so as to make for greater employment on a sustainable basis. This entails preparation of a district plan based on resource endowment and felt needs of the people. It is unfortunate that the Ministry in the revised guidelines for EAS no longer permits watershed development programmes on the ground these take more than a year to complete. However, these were leading to sustainable development of agriculture in poor areas leading to creation of job opportunities in the farm sector on a permanent basis. Works taken up under EAS should be viable and integrated with development plan of the area. Sectoral programmes of agricultural development should focus on works that enhance productivity of land such as soil and moisture conservation and drainage. Sectoral and wage-employment programmes should not be separate regimes but work as an integrated programme.

59. Several lacunae have come to notice in the design and implementation of EAS. First, bogus reporting. Field staff have learnt to report figures in the manner expected of them, that is, they must show that targets have been fully achieved irrespective of what the ground situation is. Collectors are under pressure to furnish utilisation certificates so that states could draw the next instalment from the Centre. Money is considered to have been spent once it is allotted from district to panchayats, even when no physical expenditure has taken place.

60. Second, employment generation programmes create incomes for the rural poor but leave no assets behind. Once such programmes are withdrawn, the poor may again fall below the poverty line in the absence of family based assets.

61. Third, development of vital infrastructure like road, water supply, electricity, schools and the like is neither labour-intensive nor results in assets primarily for use by the poor.

62. Fourth, employment schemes provide massive funds for road and school construction, in which villagers become (temporary) state employees of the concerned

departments and thus remain in a continued state of psychological dependence and expectation from the state.

63. Lastly, such programmes have encouraged corruption, both at political and administrative levels.

64. According to instructions issued by the Ministry, people seeking work in EAS have to apply and get registered first, a project report is prepared and submitted to the Collector and then the Collector will seek funds from the Ministry. In practice, this order is seldom followed and, in many cases, the reverse happens. That is, the Collector receives funds first, then decides the area where funds would be spent (the choice of area is often on political grounds), the Department to whom these funds would be placed follows it by preparation of a project and in the end during execution of the project the Department gets applications from those actually employed. In this manner, Collectors have a lot of discretion in deciding the placement of these funds with Departments such as PWD, Agriculture, Soil Conservation, Rural Engineering Service, Minor Irrigation etc. An unhealthy race among the Departments for funds can be checked if the Ministry insists on the correct sequence of activities. In other words, before any money is released to DRDA, the Collector must specify the Departments to whom these funds will be released and how much; and while seeking second and subsequent instalment of funds, Collector must certify that funds were given to the Departments mentioned in application for the first instalment. Collectors should also ensure coordination between Departments so that the poorest regions are covered in desirable economic activities. Lastly, applications from those seeking work must precede preparation of projects.

General Issues in EAS/JRY Programmes

65. The above review of employment-oriented programmes such as Employment Assurance Scheme and Jawahar Rozgar Yojana has highlighted certain lacunae, yet it needs to be recognized that these programmes have also played a major role in tackling issues of transient poverty and providing immediate succour to the rural people during natural calamities such like drought, floods and earthquake. The need for such public works programmes has been universally accepted and acknowledged by researchers in the field of rural development in India and by international experts and donor agencies. It is, however, imperative to strengthen these programmes and create a delivery mechanism which would take them to intended beneficiaries without leakage or diversion of funds along the way.. In this regard, a few steps could be taken and are listed below: $\frac{3}{4}$ EAS should be limited only to those districts where minimum agricultural wages are at least 25% below the statutory minimum wages fixed by Government.

In at least half of the districts actual wages are above such minimum wages. The proposed limits will help curb incidents of fudging of muster rolls and accounts. $\frac{3}{4}$ Each Technical Department must supply a list of those paid under EAS works to the concerned Gram Panchayat along with date of the payment, and Gram Panchayats in turn must check out the list. The verification certificate should be signed by at least half of the Gram Panchayat Panchs and sent to the concerned Department. No Department should be given funds for the second time without such a certificate from the Gram

Panchayat. ³/₄ The list of workers along with the number of days they have been given jobs under EAS and JRY should be displayed in each office of the Gram Panchayats and outside village schools. Similar information about beneficiaries of all other programmes like IRDP, IAY, etc. should also be displayed. Important meetings of Gram Sabhas should be videographed and a permanent record of such videos kept. ³/₄ In order to promote people's participation and ensure that Gram Panchayats and Gram Sabhas do not get reduced to the office of just the village president, each Gram Sabha should raise 30% of the allocated JRY/EAS funds through contribution from the public as a pre-requisite to receiving such funds. For backward and tribal blocks, the contribution may be reduced to 15%. ³/₄ States as have not held elections to village level panchayats without a valid reason should not be given JRY funds. Their share of the funds should be kept in suspension and passed on to the panchayats with the backlogs after elections are held. 219 ³/₄ When funds are released by DRDAs/Zilla Parishads to Blocks or Panchayats, a Press note should invariably be issued about the date and amount so released to various offices.

This move will help improve transparency. Similarly, all departments getting EAS funds will also issue a Press statement about dates of execution of works and when payments were made to the workers. This will reduce complaints that payments to workers are often delayed. A monthly gazetteer should be published at the district level setting out all works with details of individual workers and number of days they have been employed. It should not be a routine statement of man-days of employment created. The gazetteer should be made available to all concerned. ³/₄ Departments such as the DRDAs and Blocks which have more dealings with rural people should be assessed by an independent professional organisation consisting of journalists, activists, NGOs and retired government servants once in three years.

The review should look at policies and performance and recommend constructive steps for improvement. The Ministry of Rural Development at the Centre can help in the setting up of such evaluation organisations. Systems of inspection as now exist are elaborate but often preclude the possibility of a 'fresh look' being totally governmental and rigid. The system should be more open and bureaucracy should gain from the expertise of outsiders in the mode of donor agency evaluation of projects and so develop a feeling of greater accountability. The teams may consist, in addition to government servants, of development practitioners from other fields, academicians and even members of the public.

66. Employment Assurance Scheme was restructured in 1999-2000. It is now an allocation based scheme. The funds would be shared by the Centre and State Governments in the ratio of 75:25. Allocation to the States would be based on incidence of poverty and district-wise allocation within a State on the basis of an index of backwardness. The index would relate to proportion of SC/ST population in the district and the inverse of agricultural production per agricultural worker. Seventy per cent of the funds flowing to the districts would be allocated to the blocks and the rest reserved at district level and would be utilised in areas of acute distress and labour migration.

67. In order to improve the efficacy of the programme and ensure that the poor and unemployed get up to 100 days of employment in lean agriculture seasons, it is necessary to restrict the programme to areas which are backward characterised by poor agriculture; chronic poverty and hunger. National Social Assistance Programme

68. The National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) was introduced as a 100 per cent Centrally Sponsored Scheme on 15th August 1995. It has three components: namely (i) National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS), (ii) National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) and (iii) National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS). The programme represents a significant step towards fulfilment of the Directive Principles in Articles 41 and 42 of the Constitution. NSAP supplements efforts of State Governments with the objective of ensuring minimum national levels of well-being and the Central assistance is not meant to displace the State's own expenditure on Social Protection 220 Schemes. The States/Union Territories (UTs) may also expand their own coverage of social assistance independently wherever they wish to do so.

69. After some trouble in initial years, NSAP is now a popular programme. The entire allocation of Rs 560.00 crore in 1997-98 and Rs 640.20 in 1998-99 was fully utilized.

70. NSAP was evaluated by Operations Research Group (ORG) three years after its implementation. The study was taken up in eight States (Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and West Bengal). It reveals low levels of physical achievements for all the three Schemes in the first two years of implementation. However, in the third year, achievement under NOAPS has surpassed targets in most of the States whereas achievement under NFBS and NMBS continues to be low.

71. The programme has largely reached SC/ST population and women. The coverage of women in NOAPS was found to be 40-60 per cent and in NFBS 40-50 per cent. Though age norms prescribed under the programme were being followed, the criteria of identifying "destitute" were not clear and different states followed different bases. The responsibility of identifying destitutes has been entrusted to panchayats which were not always aware of the criteria. The programme appeared to have been well targeted.

72. Lack of awareness about the programme is a major problem. There is no formal system for information dissemination. Wherever gram sabhas are in place and meet regularly the information dissemination is effective.

73. The procedure of registration involves production of several proofs and certificates, which makes it very cumbersome. The panchayats may be entrusted the responsibility of verifying facts and claims.

74. The NOAPS has been a successful scheme. In the sample states, about one-third of the beneficiaries were found to be neglected by their offspring or were living alone; another one-third were found to have a dependent (mostly spouse) and in remaining cases, the beneficiaries did not have a regular source of income. However, in some

States the benefits were distributed once in two months and in some others there was no fixed frequency for distribution.

75. The evaluation revealed that the NFBS beneficiaries either saved the assistance money in a bank or used it to repay old debts. Use of benefit in income generating activities was negligible. There have been cases of corruption in implementation of the programme.

76. Most NMBS beneficiaries reported having received the benefit after the delivery. This was due to late submission of claims. There is need to create awareness about the scheme among the target segment so that claims are made well in time. The procedure under this scheme, and other schemes under NSAP, needs to be simplified and made more transparent to make it all hassle-free.

77. Apart from Central government programmes discussed in the previous sections, several State Governments have initiated their own rural development programmes. In many instances, the state initiatives have been the precursor to many countrywide programmes. Those initiatives are not only in line with the policy of democratic decentralisation but can supplement the centrally sponsored schemes. The State Governments are better placed to understand the felt needs of the local people and can respond more effectively. It has also been seen that where such State level initiatives have strong political backing, the performance has been laudable.

Tamil Nadu Namakku Name Thittam 1997-98 village level development such as construction of buildings, creation and improvement of minor irrigation works, and construction of bridges, culverts and road Tamil Nadu Anna Marumalarchi Thittam 1997-98 convergence of all basic minimum services namely drinking water, primary education, public health, nutrition, shelter, rural roads and connectivity and fair price shops Gujarat Gokul Gram Yojana 1995-96 provides basic infrastructure to all villages within a time frame of five years, such as all weather approach roads, drinking water, construction of village ponds with bathing ghats, construction of primary school rooms, community halls, community workshops and village afforestation Andhra Pradesh Janmabhoomi 1st January

Other Developmental Schemes of the Government

The Central Government of India's social programmes and welfare expenditures are a substantial portion of the official budget, and state and local governments play roles in developing and implementing social security policies. Additional welfare measure systems are also uniquely operated by various state governments. The government uses the unique identity number (Aadhar) that every Indian possesses to distribute welfare measures in India.

The Directive Principles of State Policy, enshrined in Part IV of the Indian Constitution reflects that India is a welfare state. Seats are reserved for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in government jobs, educational institutions, Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha. The government has passed laws for the abolition

of untouchability, Begar and Zamindari. Food security to all Indians are guaranteed under the National Food Security Act, 2013 where the government provides food grains to people at a very subsidised rate.

Aadhar

It is a 12-digit unique identity number that can be obtained voluntarily by residents or passport holders of India, based on their biometric and demographic data. The data is collected by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), a statutory authority established in January 2009 by the government of India, under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, following the provisions of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and other Subsidies, benefits and services) Act, 2016. Aadhaar is the world's largest biometric ID system. World Bank Chief Economist Paul Romer described Aadhaar as "the most sophisticated ID programme in the world". The government of India uses this unique identification number to distribute social security and welfare measures to its citizens.

Budget

As of 2020, the government's expenditure on social security (direct cash transfers, financial inclusion, benefits, health and other insurances, subsidies, free school meals, rural employment guarantee), was approximately Rs.1,600,000 crore (US\$220 billion), which was 7.3% of gross domestic product (GDP).

Social security budget 2020–21

Region	Social security program	Crore Rupee	Billion US\$
Pan India	Food Security (subsidy)	11000	20.83
Pan India	Petroleum (subsidy)	2500	16.17
Pan India	Health	200000	30
Pan India	Pensions	600000	60
Pan India	Accidents	130000	20
Rural	Fertilizer (subsidy)	70000	11.00

Social security budget 2020–21

Region	Social security program	Crore Rupee	Billion US\$
Rural	NREGA (non-subsidy)	151500	25
Rural	Child development (ICDS) (non-subsidy)	26000	4.5
Rural	Indira Awaas Yojana (Affordable Housing) (non-subsidy)	20000	10
Rural	Maternal and childcare benefits(non-subsidy)	30000	10
States	Various programmes of state govts (subsidy/non-subsidy)	50000	7
Pan India	Total subsidy for FY-2020-21 (approx.)	1600000	220

This section covers some of the social programmes and welfare measures in place in India at the federal level.

Employees' Provident Fund Organisation

A provident funding is a kind of pension scheme. It is mandatory for every public, private and self-employee under The Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952. Under this statutory act, every working person has a Universal Account Number (UAN), which is a 12-digit number allotted to employees who are contributing to EPF. It will be generated for each of the PF member by EPFO. The UAN will act as an umbrella for the multiple Member Ids allotted to an individual by different establishments and also remains same through the lifetime of an employee. It does not change with the change in jobs. The idea is to link multiple Member Identification Numbers (Member Id) allotted to a single member under single Universal Account Number. This will help the member to view details of all the Member Identification Numbers (Member Id) linked to it. In this account, an employee contributes 10% of his monthly salary here and his employer contributes a matching amount.

The major benefit of UAN or Universal Account Number will include easy tagging of multiple Employee's Provident Fund Member Id under a single number, thus reducing

the confusion. The UAN will help in easy transfer and withdrawals of claims. Along with this services like Online Pass-Book, SMS Services on each deposit of contribution and Online KYC Update can be provided on the basis of UAN number. One can transfer balance from one EPF to his/her another EPF account with the help of UAN.

National Health Insurances

There are a number of public and private health insurance companies operating in India which caters to the Indian middle class. For vulnerable Indians, the government has Ayushman Bharat Yojana, which is a health insurance programme that has coverage that includes 3 days of pre-hospitalisation and 15 days of post-hospitalisation expenses. Moreover, around 1,400 procedures with all related costs like OT expenses are taken care of. All in all, PMJAY and the e-card provide a coverage of Rs. 5 lakh (\$6860) per family, per year, thus helping the economically disadvantaged obtain easy access to healthcare services.

Atal Pension Yogna

It is open to all saving bank/post office saving bank account holders in the age group of 18 to 40 years and the contributions differ, based on pension amount chosen. Subscribers would receive the guaranteed minimum monthly pension of Rs. 1,000 or Rs. 2,000 or Rs. 3,000 or Rs. 4,000 or Rs. 5,000 at the age of 60 years. Under APY, the monthly pension would be available to the subscriber, and after him to his spouse and after their death, the pension corpus, as accumulated at age 60 of the subscriber, would be returned to the nominee of the subscriber. The minimum pension would be guaranteed by the Government, i.e., if the accumulated corpus based on contributions earns a lower than estimated return on investment and is inadequate to provide the minimum guaranteed pension, the Central Government would fund such inadequacy. Alternatively, if the returns on investment are higher, the subscribers would get enhanced pensionary benefits.

Free School Meals

The Midday-Meal is a school meal programme of the Government of India designed to better the nutritional standing of school-age children nationwide. The programme supplies free lunches on working days for children in primary and upper primary classes in government, government aided, local body, Education Guarantee Scheme, and alternate innovative education centres, Madarsa and Maqtabas supported under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, and National Child Labour Project schools run by the ministry of labour. Serving 120,000,000 children in over 1,265,000 schools and Education Guarantee Scheme centres, it is the largest of its kind in the world.

Under article 24, paragraph 2c of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which India is a party, India has committed to yielding "adequate nutritious food" for children. The programme has undergone many changes since its launch in 1995. The Midday Meal Scheme is covered by the National Food Security Act, 2013. The legal backing to the Indian school meal programme is akin to the legal backing provided in the US through the National School Lunch Act.

Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awaas Yojana

Under the PMGAY scheme, financial assistance worth Rs.120,000 (US\$1,700) in plain areas and Rs.130,000 (US\$1,800) in difficult areas (high land area) is provided for construction of houses. These houses are equipped with facilities such as toilet, LPG connection, electricity connection, and drinking water [convergence with other schemes e.g. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan toilets, Ujjwala Yojana LPG gas connection, Saubhagya Yojana electricity connection, etc. The houses are allotted in the name of the woman or jointly between husband and wife.

Conditional Cash Transfers to Women

Pradhan Mantri Matri Vandana Yojana is a maternity benefit programme run by the government of India. It was introduced in 2017 and is implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. It is a conditional cash transfer scheme for pregnant and lactating women of 19 years of age or above for the first live birth. It provides a partial wage compensation to women for wage-loss during childbirth and childcare and to provide conditions for safe delivery and good nutrition and feeding practices. In 2013, the scheme was brought under the National Food Security Act, 2013 to implement the provision of cash maternity benefit of Rs.6,000 (US\$84) stated in the Act. Presently, the scheme is implemented on a pilot basis in 53 selected districts and proposals are under consideration to scale it up to 200 additional 'high burden districts' in 2015–16. The eligible beneficiaries would receive the incentive given under the Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) for Institutional delivery and the incentive received under JSY would be accounted towards maternity benefits so that on an average a woman gets Rs.6,000 (US\$84)

Integrated Child Development Services

It is a government programme in India which provides food, preschool education, primary healthcare, cash transfers to families, immunization, health check-up and referral services to children under 6 years of age and their mothers.^[27] The scheme was launched in 1975, discontinued in 1978 by the government of Morarji Desai, and then relaunched by the Tenth Five Year Plan.

Tenth five-year plan also linked ICDS to Anganwadi centres established mainly in rural areas and staffed with frontline workers. In addition to fighting malnutrition and ill health, the programme is also intended to combat gender inequality by providing girls the same resources as boys.

During the 2018–19 fiscal year, the Indian central government allocated Rs.16,335 crores (\$2.18 billion) to the programme. The widespread network of ICDS has an important role in combating malnutrition especially for children of weaker groups.

National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005, is an Indian labour law and social security measure that aims to guarantee the 'right to work'. This act was passed in September 2005 under the UPA government of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. It aims to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members

volunteer to do unskilled manual work. As of 2020, the government allocated Rs 60,000 crore (\$8.19 billion) for this scheme.

National Social Assistance Scheme

The National Social Assistance Programme is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of the Government of India that provides financial assistance to the widows and persons with disabilities in the form of social pensions. As of 2018, the government allocated \$1.4 billion to this programme.

Accident Assurance Scheme

Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana is available to people (Indian Resident or NRI) between 18 and 70 years of age with bank accounts. It has an annual premium of Rs.12 (17¢ US) exclusive of taxes. The GST is exempted on Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana. The amount is automatically debited from the account. This insurance scheme can have one year cover from 1 June to 31 May and would be offered through banks and administered through public sector general insurance companies.

In case of unexpected death or full disability, the payment to the nominee will be Rs.2 lakh (US\$2,800) and in case of partial Permanent disability Rs.1 lakh (US\$1,400). Full disability has been defined as loss of use in both eyes, hands or feet. Partial Permanent disability has been defined as loss of use in one eye, hand or foot. Further, death due to suicide, alcohol, drug abuse, etc. are not covered.

More on Poverty Alleviation Programmes

Poverty Alleviation Programmes aims to reduce the rate of poverty in the country by providing proper access to food, monetary help, and basic essentials to the households and families belonging to the below the poverty line.

According to the World Bank, Poverty is pronounced deprivation in well-being and comprises many dimensions. It includes low incomes and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity. Poverty also encompasses low levels of health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice, and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one's life.

As per the Planning Commission of India, the level of poverty in a country can be estimated based on the consumer expenditure surveys that are conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. This article will talk about the various Poverty Alleviation Programmes in India and the initiatives taken by the Government of India towards poverty alleviation.

What is Poverty Alleviation?

Poverty Alleviation is the set of steps taken in an economic and humanitarian way for eradicating poverty from a country. According to the World Bank, if a person is living on \$1.90 a day or less, then he/she is living in extreme poverty, and currently, 767

million people of the world fall under that category. According to the last released official data, in 2011, 268 million people in India were surviving on less than \$1.90 a day. Various Programmes and Schemes under the Government of India were launched to eradicate poverty and for providing basic amenities to the poor households.

Schemes like Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and Housing for All by 2022 were developed to provide housing to the rural and urban poor. The latest government schemes like Start-Up India and Stand Up India focuses on empowering people to earn their livelihood.

What is Below Poverty Line (BPL)?

Below Poverty Line (BPL) can be defined as an economic benchmark used in the identification of economically weaker people and households. BPL is set by the Government of India based on a threshold income. The households or individuals having an income below this threshold value are considered to be under the below poverty line.

Measuring BPL in India

The poverty line solely depends on the per capita income in India rather than the level of prices. The poverty line is the minimum income required to purchase the basic goods and services that are essential to satisfy the basic human needs. The proportion of the population that is below this poverty line is called the poverty ratio or headcount ratio. Similar approaches are followed by most countries and international institutions for determining BPL.

In India, the first official rural and urban poverty lines at the national level were introduced in 1979 by Y. K. Alagh Committee. Criteria for the measurement of BPL are different for the rural and urban areas.

- Currently, according to the Tenth Five-Year Plan, the degree of deprivation is measured with the help of parameters with scores given from 0–4, with 13 parameters.
- Families with 17 marks or less (formerly 15 marks or less) out of a maximum of 52 marks have been classified as BPL.
- The poverty line is calculated every 5 years. According to the recent estimation based on inflation, the threshold income should be more than Rs. 962 a month for urban areas and Rs 768 a month in rural areas i.e., above Rs. 32 a day in an urban area and above Rs. 26 a day in a rural area.

Poverty Alleviation in India- Five Year Plans

Eleven Five Year Plans were launched to eradicate poverty from India. The list of these Five Year Plans that started in the year 1951 is given below:

- First Five Year Plan (1951- 1956): The plan focused mainly on agriculture and irrigation and aimed at achieving an all-round balanced development.

- **Second Five Year Plan (1956-1961):** It focused on the growth of basic and heavy industries, expansion in employment opportunities, and an increase of 25 per cent in the national income.
- **Third Five Year Plan (1961-1966):** The Chinese aggression (1962), Indo-Pak war (1965), and the severest drought led to the complete failure of the third five-year plan. It was replaced by three annual plans that continued from 1966 to 1969.
- **Fourth Five Year Plan (1966-1974):** It aimed at increasing national income by 5.5 per cent, creating economic stability, reducing inequalities in income distribution, and achieving social justice with equality.
- **Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-1979):** This plan mainly focused on the removal of poverty (Garibi Hatao) and aimed in bringing larger sections of the poor masses above the poverty line. It also assured a minimum income of Rs. 40 per person per month calculated at 1972-73 prices. The plan was terminated in 1978 instead of (1979) when the Janata Government came to power.
- **Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-1985):** Removal of poverty was the main objective of the sixth five-year plan with a major focus on economic growth, elimination of unemployment, self-sufficiency in technology, and raising the lifestyles of the weaker sections of the society.
- **Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90):** The Seventh Five Year Plan aimed in improving the living standards of the poor with a significant reduction in the incidence of poverty.
- **Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97):** This plan aimed at employment generation but later failed in achieving most of its targets.
- **Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002):** The ninth five-year plan focused on the areas of agriculture, employment, poverty, and infrastructure.
- **Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007):** The tenth five-year plan aimed at the reduction of the poverty ratio from 26 per cent to 21 per cent by the year 2007 and also to help the children in completing five years of schooling by 2007.

List of Poverty Alleviation Programmes in India

Name of the Scheme/Programme	Year of Formation	Government Ministry	Objectives
Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)	1978	Ministry of Rural Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To raise the families of identified target groups living below the poverty line through the development of sustainable opportunities for self-employment in the rural sector.
Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awaas Yojana	1985	Ministry of Rural Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create housing units for everyone along with providing 13 lakhs housing units to the rural areas. To provide loans at subsidized rates to the people. To augment wage employment opportunities to the households by providing employment on-demand and through specific guaranteed wage employment every year.
Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS)	15th August 1995	Ministry of Rural Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide pension to the senior citizens of India of 65 years or higher and living below the poverty line. It provides a monthly pension of Rs.200 for those aged between 60-79 years and Rs.500 for the people aged above 80 years.
National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS)	August 1995	Ministry of Rural Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide a sum of Rs.20,000 to the beneficiary who will be the next head of the family after the death of its primary breadwinner.

Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY)	1st April 1999	Implemented by the Village Panchayats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing the infrastructure of the rural areas which included connecting roads, schools, and hospitals. To provide sustained wage employment to the families belonging to the below poverty line.
Annapurna	1999-2000	Ministry of Rural Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide 10 kg of free food grains to the eligible senior citizens who are not registered under the National Old Age Pension Scheme.
Food for Work Programme	2000s	Ministry of Rural Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It aims at enhancing food security through wage employment. Food grains are supplied to states free of cost, however, the supply of food grains from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) godowns has been slow
Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana (SGRY)	—	—	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main objective of the scheme continues to be the generation of wage employment, creation of durable economic infrastructure in rural areas and provision of food and nutrition security for the poor.
Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)	2005	Ministry of Rural Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Act provides 100 days assured employment every year to every rural household. One-third of the proposed jobs would be reserved for women. The central government will also establish National

			<p>Employment Guarantee Funds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similarly, state governments will establish State Employment Guarantee Funds for implementation of the scheme. Under the programme, if an applicant is not provided employment within 15 days s/he will be entitled to a daily unemployment allowance.
National Food Security Mission	2007	Ministry of Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To increase production of rice, wheat, pulses and coarse cereals through area expansion and productivity enhancement in a sustainable manner in the identified districts of the country
National Rural Livelihood Mission	2011	Ministry of Rural Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It evolves out the need to diversify the needs of the rural poor and provide them jobs with regular income on a monthly basis. Self Help groups are formed at the village level to help the needy
National Urban Livelihood Mission	2013	Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It focuses on organizing urban poor in Self Help Groups, creating opportunities for skill development leading to market-based employment and helping them to set up self-employment ventures by ensuring easy access to credit

Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana	2014	Ministry of Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It aimed at direct benefit transfer of subsidy, pension, insurance etc. and attained the target of opening 1.5 crore bank accounts. The scheme particularly targets the unbanked poor
Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana	2015	Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It will focus on fresh entrant to the labour market, especially labour market and class X and XII dropouts
Saansad Aadarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY)	2014	Ministry of Rural development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop the institutional and physical infrastructure in three villages by 2019. The scheme aims to develop five 'Adarsh Villages' or 'Model Villages' by 2024.
Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana	2015	Ministry of Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scheme provides life coverage to the poor and low-income section of the society. The scheme offers a maximum assured amount of Rs.2 lakhs
Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana	2015	Ministry of Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The scheme is an insurance policy to the people belonging to the underprivileged sections of the society
National Maternity Benefit Scheme	2016	Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoHFW)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide a sum of Rs.6000 to a pregnant mother who is aged above 19 years. The sum is provided normally 12–8 weeks before the birth in three instalments and can also be availed even after the death of the child.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)	2016	Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It envisages the distribution of 50 million LPG connections to women below the poverty line
Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY)	2016	Ministry of Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the scheme provides an opportunity to declare unaccounted wealth and black money in a confidential manner and avoid prosecution after paying a fine of 50% on the undisclosed income. An additional 25% of the undisclosed income is invested in the scheme which can be refunded after four years, without any interest.
Solar Charkha Mission	2018	Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It aims at Employment generation for nearly one lakh people through solar charkha clusters in rural areas
National Nutrition Mission (NNM), Poshan Abhiyan	2018	Ministry of Women and Child Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to reduce the level of under-nutrition and also enhance the nutritional status of children in the country. Also, to improve the nutritional outcomes of adolescents, children, pregnant women and lactating mothers
Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan (PM-SYM)	2019	Ministry of Labour and Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a central government scheme that is introduced for old age protection and social security of Unorganised Workers (UW)

Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi – PM SVanidhi	2020	Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It aims to provide micro-credit facilities to street vendors affected due to COVID-19 pandemic
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- Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012): The eleventh five-year plan targets towards reducing poverty by 10 percentage points, generating 7 crore new employment opportunities, and ensuring electricity connection to all villages.

Poverty Alleviation Programmes in India

As per the 2011-2012 estimation by the Planning Commission of India, 25.7 % of the rural population was under the below-poverty line and for the urban areas, it was 13.7 %. The rate of poverty in the rural areas is comparatively higher than that in the urban areas due to the lack of proper infrastructure, insufficient food supply, and poor employment system.

The major Poverty Alleviation Programmes that were developed with an initiative to eradicate poverty are mentioned in the table below:

Apart from eradicating poverty in India, the Poverty Alleviation Programmes also took an initiative in providing employment opportunities to the households of the BPL categories.

Pradhan Mantri SVANidhi Scheme	Solar Charkha Mission	Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)
Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, (MGNREGA)	National Food Security Act, 2013
National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM)	DAY-NULM National Urban Livelihood Mission	Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)
PMKVY – Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana	Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana – SAGY	Economic Empowerment of Weaker Sections
Prime Minister Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana	Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana	Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)

Prime Minister Ujjwala Plan	PM Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY)	National Nutrition Mission – Poshan Abhiyan
Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan	National Pension Scheme	Nai Roshni Scheme

Role of Public Distribution System in Poverty Alleviation

The Public Distribution System (PDS) which evolved as a system of management for food and distribution of food grains plays a major role in poverty alleviation. This programme is operated jointly by the Central Government and the State Government of India. The responsibilities include:

- Allocations of commodities such as rice, wheat, kerosene, and sugar to the States and Union Territories.
- Issue of Ration Cards for the people below the poverty line.
- Identification of families living below the poverty line.
- Management of food scarcity and distribution of food grains.

PDS was later relaunched as Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) in June 1997 and is controlled by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Government of India. TPDS plays a major role in the implementation and identification of the poor for proper arrangement and delivery of food grains. Therefore, the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) under the Government of India plays the same role as the PDS but adds a special focus on the people below the poverty line.

Why is employment generation important in poverty alleviation in India?

The unemployment issue in India is considered as one of the major causes of poverty in India. The poverty rate of a country can be reduced with high economic growth and by reducing the unemployment problem. Various poverty alleviation programmes are set up under the Government of India that aims to eradicate poverty by providing employment on-demand and through specific guaranteed wage employment every year to the households living below the poverty line.

The generation of employment is important in poverty alleviation because of the following reasons:

- It will increase the income level of the poor household families and will help in reducing the rate of poverty in the country. Hence, there is a significant relationship between unemployment and poverty.
- It will decrease the rural-urban migration through the generation of employment programs in rural areas.

- An increase in the income level through the generation of employment programs will help the poor in accessing basic facilities including education, health facilities, and sanitation.

What are the reasons for the ineffectiveness of poverty alleviation programs?

The major reasons for the ineffectiveness of the poverty alleviation programs are mentioned below:

- The poverty alleviation program may not properly identify and target the exact number of poor families in rural areas. As a result, some of the families who are not registered under these programs are benefited by the facilities rather than the eligible ones
- Overlapping of similar government schemes is a major cause of ineffectiveness as it leads to confusion among poor people and authorities and the benefits of the scheme do not reach the poor.
- Overpopulation of the country increases the burden of providing the benefits of the schemes to a large number of people and thus reduces the effectiveness of the programs.
- Corruption at various levels of implementation of schemes is another major reason.

Issues related to Hunger in India

It is rightly said that the dark cloud has a silver lining. The bigger picture may appear grim but there is also a ray of hope. While the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the world report shows the possibility of global hunger situation, the estimated number of undernourished people around the world in 2019, at almost 690 million, has gone up by 10 million from the previous year, the findings for India show that there has been some improvement too. Over 10 years there has been a significant decline in the number of Indians affected by hunger along with stunted children declined by 60 million. This is a significant achievement for a nation like India, which was ranked 102 out of 117 countries on the Global Hunger Index, as recently as last year. The report is seen as the result of the long term economic growth, reduced inequality and better access to basic goods and services.

This means that certain efforts to reduce starvation problems such as the midday meal programme are slowly bearing fruit. But still the question that arises is, “Can India now rest depending on the fact of being a food-secure nation?” The answer to this question cannot be simply one. The primary reason for this is starvation – a vast section of Indian citizens are still beyond the ambit of nutrition and food security. There had been several incidents regarding this problem but there was no official acknowledgment of those problems from either the state or the Centre. This indicates a deeper problem at the structural level. For instance, the mass digitization initiatives by the government in the name of the welfare of the people actually reduce the scope of access to food, especially for the poor.

But the government is seldom held responsible. Moreover, the report has also found the adult obesity in India has been on the rise. The number of obese Indians shot up from 25.2 million in 2012 to 34.3 million in 2016. This problem of malnourishment is mainly the result of faulty consumption patterns and bohemian lifestyle of the urban people because food hurdles are not the main problem in cities. Thus there is a dual problem, the lack of food in the hinterland and the nature of consumption in cities. To address this twin problem the government should shift the focus to not only plugging the leakages to the Indian food distribution system but also educating people – on the importance of the consumption of healthy foods and support local, traditional cuisines.

In an unequal world there is disparity among people; but one thought ‘hunger’ as a serious problem had not exactly vanished, but it was slowly easing away. Not so, reminds the latest Global Hunger Index that has classified India at Rank No.102 among 117 nations. It is indeed depressing to know that India has slipped seven notches from No.95th in 2010, and that our immediate neighbours – Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan – have performed better.

The Global Hunger Index (GHI), brought out annually by German NGO Welthungerhilfe and an Irish aid agency, Concern Worldwide, reports on hunger and under-nutrition worldwide based on four key indicators – undernourishment, child stunting, child wasting and child mortality. While India improved its score in under-5 mortality rate, its child wasting rate (children who have low weight compared to their height, and is a reflection of undernutrition) at 20.8 per cent was the worst and a huge cause of concern. “It’s child stunting rate, 37.9 per cent, is also categorized as very high in terms of its public health significance,” it said.

It’s not all bad news, as the GHI records that there has been progress especially with a decline in poverty at a global level from 28.6 per cent to 9.9 per cent in 2015. However, climate change, violent conflicts and wars economic slowdowns continue to drive hunger in many parts of the world.

IS INDIA DOING ENOUGH?

There have been protests at home from government authorities who point out that India’s size is too big for comparison; that its population is equal to 193 countries. Tangentially, the GHI report too concedes: “Because of its large population, India’s GHI indicator values have an outsized impact on the indicator values for the region.”

A study on malnutrition among children in India by the NGO Child Rights & You (CRY) showed that of 472 million children (2011 census), a whopping 97 million, or one-fourth, are anemic and undernourished; and that 40 of every 1,000 infants don’t get to celebrate their first birthday. Given that 90 per cent of the development of a human brain occurs up to the age of six years, intervention of the state has to be in these early formative years. However, there are just not enough resources or government effort.

The Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) is one of the largest public service schemes in India targeted at children below the age of six years, but it only covers

half the country's population. Even then, the budget allocation for the ICDS scheme declined by 9.6 per cent, from Rs 15,584 crore in FY2016 to Rs 14,862 crore in the following year.

THERE ARE ANSWERS

Even within current parameters, the 'hunger problem' can be rolled back. Compared to India's poor record of child stunting, Bangladesh has scored well primarily due to rising household wealth associated with pro-poor economic growth, gains in parental education, as well as improved health and sanitation factors. Food and nutrition security in rural areas has been a major program in the country, and data from 1996-2011 shows increased rice yields associated with the Green Revolution helped raise calorie availability and boost children's weight.

It is not that India has not put programs in place. The National Food Security Act, 2013 was promulgated to provide food and nutritional security at affordable prices. However, it is found that the state does not reach large sections of the people especially marginalized tribes and Dalits, who find themselves ostracized by the distribution system.

Experiments with micro-intervention have shown that hunger can be tackled with very basic tools. Living Farms, a Welthungerlife partner, working in the hills of Odisha, found ways of improving the well being of rural households by an 'ecological and sustainable approach to agriculture'. The target is to 're-establish the control of these farmers over food and farming systems through the conservation, renewal and rejuvenation of biodiversity.'

GHI's answer is the government and international groups must intervene more actively to support vulnerable communities and victims of natural disasters and climate change; and health and nutrition support systems have to be reviewed and strengthened. There is a macro-level answer too. The current political climate and social divisions discourage domestic migration, and international migration is mostly illegal as we painfully learn each day. If these barriers are opened, perhaps shifting population and demographic change will offer an answer to the problem.

In the debate of micro-intervention to alleviate communities from poverty initiated by Nobel laureates Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo, the macro-answer offered by economist Michael Clemens of the Center for Global Development is: remove or reduce barriers to immigration and it will create trillions of dollars of additional income for those from the poor countries. It will also improve the productivity of the rich nations.

Issues relating to Health Sector in India

The Indian healthcare scenario presents a spectrum of contrasting landscapes. At one end of the spectrum are the glitzy steel and glass structures delivering high tech medicare to the well-heeled, mostly urban Indian. At the other end are the ramshackle outposts in the remote reaches of the "other India" trying desperately to live up to their identity as health subcenters, waiting to be transformed to shrines of health and wellness, a story which we will wait to see unfold. With the rapid pace of change

currently being witnessed, this spectrum is likely to widen further, presenting even more complexity in the future.

Our country began with a glorious tradition of public health, as seen in the references to the descriptions of the Indus valley civilization (5500–1300 BCE) which mention “Arogya” as reflecting “holistic well-being.” The Chinese traveler Fa-Hien (tr.AD 399–414) takes this further, commenting on the excellent facilities for curative care at the time. Today, we are a country of more than 1.3 billion people (estimated as of this writing) who present an enormous diversity, and therefore, an enormous challenge to the healthcare delivery system. This brings into sharp focus the WHO theme of 2018, which calls for “Universal Health Coverage-Everyone, Everywhere.”

What are the challenges in delivering healthcare to the “everyone” which must include the socially disadvantaged, the economically challenged, and the systemically marginalized? What keeps us from reaching the “everywhere,” which must include the remote areas in our Himalayan region for instance, where until recently, essentials were airlifted by air force helicopters?.

While there are many challenges, present five “A's” for our consideration:

1. **Awareness or the lack of it:** How aware is the Indian population about important issues regarding their own health? Studies on awareness are many and diverse, but lacunae in awareness appear to cut across the lifespan in our country. Adequate knowledge regarding breastfeeding practice was found in only one-third of the antenatal mothers in two studies. Moving ahead in the lifecycle, a study in urban Haryana found that only 11.3% of the adolescent girls studied knew correctly about key reproductive health issues. A review article on geriatric morbidity found that 20.3% of participants were aware of common causes of prevalent illness and their prevention.

Why is the level of health awareness low in the Indian population? The answers may lie in low educational status, poor functional literacy, low accent on education within the healthcare system, and low priority for health in the population, among others.

What is encouraging is that efforts to enhance awareness levels have generally shown promising results. For instance, a study in Bihar and Jharkhand demonstrated improved levels of awareness and perceptions about abortion following a behavioral change intervention. A review on the effectiveness of interventions on adolescent reproductive health showed a considerable increase in the awareness levels of girls with regard to knowledge of health problems, environmental health, nutritional awareness, and reproductive and child health following intervention.

The message is clear – we must strive to raise awareness in those whom we work with and must encourage the younger generation to believe in the power of education for behavior change.

2. **Access or the lack of it:** Access (to healthcare) is defined by the Oxford dictionary as “The right or opportunity to use or benefit from (healthcare)”

Again, when we look beyond the somewhat well-connected urban populations to the urban underprivileged, and to their rural counterparts, the question “What is the level of access of our population to healthcare of good quality?” is an extremely relevant one. A 2002 paper speaks of access being a complex concept and speaks of aspects of availability, supply, and utilization of healthcare services as being factors in determining access. Barriers to access in the financial, organizational, social, and cultural domains can limit the utilization of services, even in places where they are “available.”

Physical reach is one of the basic determinants of access, defined as “the ability to enter a healthcare facility within 5 km from the place of residence or work” Using this definition, a study in India in 2012 found that in rural areas, only 37% of people were able to access IP facilities within a 5 km distance, and 68% were able to access out-patient facilities Krishna and Ananthapur, in their 2012 paper, postulate that in general, the more rustic (rural) one's existence – the further one lives from towns – the greater are the odds of disease, malnourishment, weakness, and premature death.

Even if a healthcare facility is physically accessible, what is the quality of care that it offers? Is that care continuously available? While the National (Rural) Health Mission has done much to improve the infrastructure in the Indian Government healthcare system, a 2012 study of six states in India revealed that many of the primary health centers (PHCs) lacked basic infrastructural facilities such as beds, wards, toilets, drinking water facility, clean labor rooms for delivery, and regular electricity.

As thinkers in the disciplines of community medicine and public health, we must encourage discussion on the determinants of access to healthcare. We should identify and analyze possible barriers to access in the financial, geographic, social, and system-related domains, and do our best to get our students and peers thinking about the problem of access to good quality healthcare.

3. **Absence or the human power crisis in healthcare:** Any discussion on healthcare delivery should include arguably the most central of the characters involved – the human workforce. Do we have adequate numbers of personnel, are they appropriately trained, are they equitably deployed and is their morale in delivering the service reasonably high?

A 2011 study estimated that India has roughly 20 health workers per 10,000 population, with allopathic doctors comprising 31% of the workforce, nurses and midwives 30%, pharmacists 11%, AYUSH practitioners 9%, and others 9%. This workforce is not distributed optimally, with most preferring to work in areas where infrastructure and facilities for family life and growth are higher. In general, the poorer areas of Northern and Central India have lower densities of health workers compared to the Southern states.

While the private sector accounts for most of the health expenditures in the country, the state-run health sector still is the only option for much of the rural and peri-urban areas of the country. The lack of a qualified person at the point of

delivery when a person has traveled a fair distance to reach is a big discouragement to the health-seeking behavior of the population. According to the rural health statistics of the Government of India (2015), about 10.4% of the sanctioned posts of auxiliary nurse midwives are vacant, which rises to 40.7% of the posts of male health workers. Twenty-seven percentage of doctor posts at PHCs were vacant, which is more than a quarter of the sanctioned posts.

Considering that the private sector is the major player in healthcare service delivery, there have been many programs aiming to harness private expertise to provide public healthcare services. The latest is the new nationwide scheme proposed which accredits private providers to deliver services reimbursable by the Government. In an ideal world, this should result in the improvement of coverage levels, but does it represent a transfer of responsibility and an acknowledgment of the deficiencies of the public health system?

As trainers and educators in public health, how are we equipping our trainees to deliver a health service in the manner required, at the place where it is needed and at the time when it is essential? It is time for a policy on health human power to be articulated, which must outline measures to ensure that the last Indian is taken care of by a sensitive, trained, and competent healthcare worker.

4. **Affordability or the cost of healthcare:** Quite simply, how costly is healthcare in India, and more importantly, how many can afford the cost of healthcare?

It is common knowledge that the private sector is the dominant player in the healthcare arena in India. Almost 75% of healthcare expenditure comes from the pockets of households, and catastrophic healthcare cost is an important cause of impoverishment. Added to the problem is the lack of regulation in the private sector and the consequent variation in quality and costs of services.

The public sector offers healthcare at low or no cost but is perceived as being unreliable, of indifferent quality and generally is not the first choice, unless one cannot afford private care.

The solutions to the problem of affordability of healthcare lie in local and national initiatives. Nationally, the Government expenditure on health must urgently be scaled up, from <2% currently to at least 5%–6% of the gross domestic product in the short term. This will translate into the much-needed infrastructure boost in the rural and marginalized areas and hopefully to better availability of healthcare— services, infrastructure, and personnel. The much-awaited national health insurance program should be carefully rolled out, ensuring that the smallest member of the target population is enrolled and understands what exactly the scheme means to her.

Locally, a consciousness of cost needs to be built into the healthcare sector, from the smallest to the highest level. Wasteful expenditure, options which demand high spending, unnecessary use of tests, and procedures should be avoided. The average medical student is not exposed to issues of cost of care during the course. Exposing young minds to issues of economics of healthcare will hopefully bring

in a realization of the enormity of the situation, and the need to address it in whatever way possible.

5. Accountability or the lack of it: Being accountable has been defined as the procedures and processes by which one party justifies and takes responsibility for its activities.

In the healthcare profession, it may be argued that we are responsible for a variety of people and constituencies. We are responsible to our clients primarily in delivering the service that is their due. Our employers presume that the standard of service that is expected will be delivered. Our peers and colleagues expect a code of conduct from us that will enable the profession to grow in harmony. Our family and friends have their own expectations of us, while our government and country have an expectation of us that we will contribute to the general good. A spiritual or religious dimension may also be considered, where we are accountable to the principles of our faith.

In the turbulent times that we live in, the relationships with all the constituents listed above have come under stress, with the client-provider axis being the most prominently affected. While unreasonable expectations may be at the bottom of much of the stress, it is time for the profession to recognize that the first step on the way forward is the recognition of the problem and its possible underlying causes. Ethics in healthcare should be a hotly discussed issue, within the profession, rather than outside it.

Communication is a key skill to be inculcated among the young professionals who will be the leaders of the profession tomorrow. As leaders in community medicine and public health, we may be the best placed to put this high up in the list of skills to be imparted. A good communicator is better placed to deal with the pressures of the relationships with client, employer, peer, colleague, family, friend, and government.

The five as presented above present challenges to the health of the public in our glorious country. As we get ready to face a future which is full of possibility and uncertainty in equal measure, let us recognize these and other challenges and prepare to meet them, remembering that the fight against ill health is the fight against all that is harmful to humanity.

National Health Policy 2017

The Union Cabinet this week approved the National Health Policy 2017 after having deferred it twice before. The last health policy was issued 15 years ago in 2002. As Prime Minister Narendra Modi puts it, “The National Health policy marks a historic moment in our endeavour to create a healthy India where everyone has access to quality healthcare.” Aiming to provide healthcare in an “assured manner” to all, the policy will strive to address current and emerging challenges arising from the ever-changing socio-economic, technological and epidemiological scenarios.

Primary features

According to Health Minister J P Nadda, the policy advocates a progressively incremental assurance-based approach. It envisages providing larger package of assured comprehensive primary health care through the ‘Health and Wellness Centres’ and

denotes important change from very selective to comprehensive primary health care package which includes care for major NCDs [non-communicable diseases], mental health, geriatric health care, palliative care and rehabilitative care services.

It aims to allocate major proportion of resources to primary care and intends to ensure availability of two beds per 1,000 population distributed in a manner to enable access within golden hour [the first hour after traumatic injury, when the victim is most likely to benefit from emergency treatment].

In addition, the policy proposes free drugs, free diagnostics and free emergency and essential health care services in all public hospitals in a bid to provide access and financial protection. It also envisages a three-dimensional integration of AYUSH systems encompassing cross referrals, co-location and integrative practices across systems of medicines. It also boasts of having an effective grievance redressal mechanism.

The policy proposes raising public health expenditure to 2.5 per cent of the GDP in a time-bound manner. According to the Health Minister, the 2.5 per cent of GDP spend target for this sector would be met by 2025.

Key targets

Among key targets, the policy intends to increase life expectancy at birth from 67.5 to 70 by 2025 and reduce infant mortality rate to 28 by 2019. It also aims to reduce under five mortality to 23 by the year 2025. Besides, it intends to achieve the global 2020 HIV target.

Deficiencies

The indication that the policy would adopt an “assurance-based approach” itself abandons a radical change proposed in the draft policy of 2015 — that of a National Health Rights Act aimed at making health a right. It replicates portions of the health section of the 2017 Budget speech given by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley. It reiterates health spend targets set by the High Level Expert Group (HLEG) set up by the erstwhile Planning Commission for the 12th Five Year Plan (which ends on March 31, 2017), in addition to failing to make health a justiciable right in the way the Right to Education 2005 did for school education.

Healthcare in India: Challenges and Opportunities

India's healthcare scenario seems to be at crossroads, where there are some positive achievements on the health indicator, but suffers some serious shortcomings in care delivery. The country has been successful in eradicating polio, reducing epidemics caused by tropical diseases and controlled HIV to a large extent. However, it still faces a huge economic burden due to NCDs, struggles to balance accessibility, affordability and quality and is unable to hike public health budgets.

In order to strengthen healthcare delivery and improve business prospects, policy makers, healthcare providers, business leaders, technology providers and pharma companies will need to devise strategies that transforms a spark into a sustainable fire. Here are insights from healthcare leaders that can lead India towards a healthy tomorrow.

The current scenario

Amidst the efforts going on, there are several challenges in the current state of healthcare in India, according to Raviganesh Venkataraman, CEO, Cloudnine Group of Hospitals. Some of these include inadequate reach of basic healthcare services, shortage of medical personnel, quality assurance, inadequate outlay for health and most importantly insufficient impetus to research. Since the magnitude of these challenges is significant, these cannot be resolved by the government alone. The key is to get the private sector to participate, while the government continues to invest and enable, he further says.

He suggested that use of decision support systems and technology is critical to solve issues. “When we have limited resources and limited supply of skilled caregivers, it is necessary to find ways to use technology to maximise their throughput without sacrificing on quality and outcomes. Technology can play a big part in this, it is the best way to achieve the vision of a connected healthcare ecosystem. Medical devices in hospitals/ clinics, mobile care applications, wearables and sensors are all different forms of technology that are transforming this ecosystem. Along with technology, by adding an analytics layer to this, caregivers can provide a much better analysis of the condition and recommendations to the patient,” Venkataraman points out. Dr Ashutosh Raghuvanshi, MD and CEO, Fortis Healthcare shares, “On one hand, we face an ever-increasing need for quality and accessible healthcare, the double burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases (NCDs), inadequate healthcare infrastructure and lack of skilled resources that add to the burden of providing quality care to the patient; on the other, our doctors are globally recognised, and India is the chosen destination for international patients with often incurable disease conditions, who find the right medical solutions in India. With the launch of Ayushman Bharat — PMJAY in 2018 (world’s largest government healthcare scheme), 50 crore marginalised beneficiaries have an opportunity to get access to hospital care. Additionally, healthcare in India, particularly the hospital and medtech space is set for growth and innovation through FDI and PE funds.”

In his opinion, the biggest challenge the healthcare sector is facing currently is the shortage of skilled medical workforce. He informed, “There is one government doctor for every 10,189 people in India, whereas the WHO recommendation is 1:1000. Although, six states in India like Delhi, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Goa have more doctors than the WHO norm, it is a highly imbalanced picture and most of them are unwilling to move to Bihar or Uttar Pradesh (UP), the states that suffer from an acute shortage of doctors. There needs to be a system where we can focus on skilling and upgrading medical workforce skills in the needed geographies. Here, the private

sector can play a vital role in the skill development of doctors, nurses and health workers.”

Just like Venkataraman and Raghuvanshi, Dr Naresh Trehan, CMD, Medanta — The Medcity, had a view that even though the Government of India is trying hard to provide better healthcare to its citizens, they are deprived of the access. “Despite the government’s efforts, majority of our people remain deprived of access to healthcare, especially at the secondary and tertiary levels. In addition to this, there are challenges of affordability, accountability and the dual burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases. Across the healthcare spectrum, lack of infrastructure access, skilled professionals, quality, patient awareness and use of health insurance are lacunas,” he lamented.

For a healthy India, he suggested, “We need preventive and/or promotive health: prevention, early detection and treatment. A strong primary healthcare system will lead to a healthier India while helping us manage the country’s health better.”

Dr Ramakanta Panda, Cardiovascular Thoracic Surgeon and Vice Chairman, Asian Heart Institute, had a view that the current state of healthcare in India is a triple A crisis of access, affordability and apathy. “Given that we are not a developed nation, access to healthcare is a major issue in India. We must attract the best talent into the profession, who are apprehensive because violence against healthcare professionals is creating ‘fear.’ This, and lack of availability of medicines and healthcare services, aggravates the access problem,” he said.

He further added, “In terms of affordability, healthcare is a calamity that throws an afflicted family into the jaws of poverty. About 55 million Indians were dragged into poverty in a single year due to patient-care costs, according to a study by the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI). Government spending on public health is just one per cent of GDP in India. How to spend scarce tax rupees on healthcare must be considered carefully. World over, the trend is towards healthcare management, focussing on patient education and prevention.”

According to Dr Panda, the current biggest challenge India’s public and private healthcare sector is facing is revolutionising medical education. “A student pursuing medicine has to study for over five years to get an MBBS degree, then another three years for a postgraduate and a further three years for a super-speciality like cardiology, neurosurgery, etc. This alone does not suffice and they have to spend few years to gain experience. To add to this, most medical education in the country is controlled by private medical colleges charging over a crore rupees for an MBBS seat or more than Rs 2- 3 crores for post-graduate seats. We have to ensure that medical education is affordable. Apart from that, the government must also allow private hospitals to train young doctors in super-specialities,” he asserts.

Raising the biggest issue that afflicts both patients and providers, Sumit Goel, Partner – Healthcare Advisory, KPMG India, speaks about the trust deficit between patients and healthcare service providers. “Studies estimate that only two in five patients

believed that hospitals acted in their best interest,” he notified. He further speaks about the reasons for which hospitals struggle to stay afloat. “NCDs require possibly long-term care to be provided in out-of-hospital settings such as at clinics/patients’ home or at any place of patient’s convenience. However, the sector, in its current form, is designed for hospitalised care.

Insurance providers, be it government or insurance companies, are taking steps to fix prices of healthcare services, which are putting margin pressure on private healthcare providers. These providers are still to realign their cost structures to effectively respond to these challenges,” he states.

Policymaking — A cause of concern?

Policymaking is certainly one of the most important aspects for providing effective health services. Venkataraman says, “The problem in India is fundamentally of supply than demand. Policymaking has to largely focus on encouraging capacity creation in the supply side. Price will be an outcome of the balance between demand and supply. While price controls, especially on the essentials may be required, the key to solving this from a long term is to focus on creating supply. The supply problem is not just restricted to capacity, but also to access. So, both need to be addressed.”

As per Goel, certain industry practices in the healthcare value chain had inflated the prices to levels which were a cause of serious concern from a patient’s affordability perspective. Hence, regulatory price controls were introduced, which in turn impacted profit margins of the private healthcare sector. While the need is appreciated, the controls should not lead to healthcare providers becoming financially distressed, especially when hospital infrastructural inadequacy is a serious issue in itself.

The best outcomes can be achieved if any policy is framed through a consultative approach with inputs from all stakeholders, suggested Dr Raghuvanshi. He said, “In 2019, the government has notified all medical devices under medicines, and not under a separate Act. There are caps on the prices of cardiac stents and orthopaedic knee implants. It is always viable to have a roadmap for a comprehensive policy formulation in consultation with the hospital sector and other stakeholders. In addition, with 80 per cent import dependence on medical devices, we need to have a rational approach to ensure quality products for the best patient outcomes.”

Strengthening public health

The Government of India has introduced several programmes to provide better care to its citizens. Ayushman Bharat – PMJAY, the non-communicable diseases programme, the communicable diseases programmes on tuberculosis (TB), malaria, HIV and the National Tobacco Control Programme, the Pulse Polio campaign or the national immunisation programme, have done commendable work. However, more needs to be done.

Dr Raghuvanshi points out, “Healthcare and social security in general can no longer be the responsibility of a single department or ministry. Clean water and air, without which good health is not possible, depend on cropping practices, industrial regulation, pollution control, environmental protection and law enforcement. It’s not a single policy, but interconnected, multi-pronged thinking that is needed. In addition, India is now in the midst of a significant economic slowdown, and investments have slowed down considerably. In such a scenario, policies about cost-cutting cannot be the only answer. If hospitals are to survive, the government must encourage medical tourism in a big way. Policies pertaining to social security – that include care of expectant mothers and children, unemployment allowance, disability payments, old age security, skills training and re-skilling, housing and healthcare, are all linked.”

In Dr Trehan’s view, the industry and government must collaborate to come up with efficacious solutions. “To achieve sizeable gains, it is important for the government and industry to develop partnerships with a focus on improving coverage and providing access to quality healthcare services to the people. For instance, in view of the current TB burden in India, a lot needs to be done if we want to eliminate it by 2025. India has the highest burden of both TB and multi-drug-resistant TB with a huge number of cases that are not notified or remain undiagnosed. Active tuberculosis patients need assessment of their nutritional status at diagnosis and throughout the treatment. The government’s decision to allocate Rs 600 crore for providing nutritional support to all tuberculosis patients would mean better cure and higher treatment completion rates and overall better performance status. Further, the move to open one medical college for every three parliamentary constituencies will help in addressing the challenges related to availability of healthcare professionals in hospitals, improve access to healthcare and bridge the demand-supply gap,” he said.

Drawing attention towards the rising cost of healthcare, Dr Trehan also said, “The high cost of healthcare and out-of-pocket expenditure force families to sell their assets, pushing nearly 60 million people every year into poverty. To maximise benefits, it may be wise to establish a link among various health initiatives announced in the budget and also with related programmes like the National Health Mission. Clarity is also needed on what services will be provided by the government health facilities, for which conditions patients will have to use private parties and what mechanisms are available. There is a need for uniformly pricing systems for various health interventions, including diagnostics and medicines and ensuring transparency. A continuum of care systems also needs to be established by linking hospitals with health centres and with the community. Community engagement is thus crucial in planning and implementation of the programme. They must also ensure that health and wellness centres and primary health centres are responsive to the needs of the community.”

Dr Panda further pointed out on the manifesto of the Budget 2019 which stated that close to 10 lakh patients have benefitted from free medical treatment via Ayushman Bharat, which would have otherwise cost them Rs 3,000 crore. He also said that lakhs of poor and middle-class people are also benefitting from reduction in the prices of essential medicines, cardiac stents and knee implants, and availability of medicines at affordable prices through Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Kendras. “By 2030, the

government has expressed commitment to work towards a distress-free health care and a functional and comprehensive wellness system for all. This is a lofty goal and we must support the government in whatever way possible,” he emphasised.

Access to quality medicines

It is often said that quality, safety and efficacy of a medicine is a must. In keeping with this, Goel, said, “There are two intertwined issues — one is how to ensure that best quality medicines are produced and that the integrity of the drug is maintained during the distribution process; second, how it can be ensured that quality medicines are affordable, so that they can be accessed when needed. The first issue requires strengthening of quality standards and their strict implementation so that there are no two different quality of drugs — one for the developed regulated market, and the other, for the Indian market. To address the second issue, it is important to make quality generic drugs available to patients. Government and some startups have taken steps in this direction by opening a chain of retail pharmacies which dispense only quality generic drugs at a fraction of the cost.”

Dr Panda told that an estimated 469 million people in India do not have regular access to essential medicines, according to the WHO. Easy availability of essential drugs is critical for India’s healthcare system. Indians are the sixth biggest out-of-pocket (OOP) health spenders in the low-middle income group of 50 nations, as per a May 2017 IndiaSpend report. “Around 70 per cent of the overall household expenditure on health is on medicines; which is an important factor contributing to poverty,” he said.

Venkataraman added, “On one hand, healthcare is largely financed through out-of-pocket payments and on the other, access to the right doctors, facilities, treatment and medication in a timely manner is limited to a few metro cities, and thus, large parts of the country lack this access. India has a reach and access issue for most products. The starting point of solving this will come from the acceptance of the fact that pharma is a business and not a charity. We need the government and the pharma companies to work hand-in-hand and arrive at a model that resolves the commercial and the social objective.”

He also expressed his concern saying, “As the population ages and more people begin to need medical and social care, this dual problem is poised to assume mammoth proportions in the next 20 years, unless we take significant measures to address it now with bold measures in policy and implementation. On the policy side, the Indian government has made a bold commitment to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC) through Ayushman Bharat, which aims to provide affordable healthcare to the entire population and reduce their expenses on healthcare.”

Amidst various issues Pradhanmantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) has come up as a relief for many who are dependent on generics and can’t afford branded medicines. In this regard, Raghuvanshi said, “The presence of a large number of generic drug manufacturers in India means that essential drugs should be widely available across India. The Government of India has, through its Jan Aushadhi scheme, made a

large-scale effort to make medicines available at affordable prices at pharmacies across the country. However, accessibility remains an overall challenge which needs to be tackled at various fronts. Primary healthcare centres need to be strengthened, incentives need to be given to generic medicine manufacturers, pharmacists and supply chains. Public-private partnerships can provide some solutions on this issue. The role of the national regulator needs to be redefined to that of a facilitator. Technology and start-up incubators can play an important role here by creating new platforms for medicine supply and distribution.”

Digital tools

India is currently experiencing a digital revolution. Healthcare too is witnessing a digital transformation. Leveraging digital technologies can certainly strengthen healthcare delivery in India, opine these experts. “Digital technologies are driving greater efficiency in healthcare delivery. Electronic Medical Record (EMR), the digital version of physical medical record, for instance, is playing a crucial role in optimising patient care by ensuring continuity and aiding information sharing across caregivers (hospital, diagnostic lab, pharmacy, etc). It replicates existing processes digitally with different degrees of automation, reasonable process optimisation and operational management information system (MIS), which otherwise is labour-intensive and prone to human error,” emphasised Dr Trehan.

He also mentioned the significance of telemedicine, which, according to him, is of immense benefit to patients in remote locations. “Offering convenience, it helps them to gain access to doctors without physical travel. This aids better management of chronic diseases and consistent post-operative monitoring. Wearable technology is aiding seamless and accurate health monitoring. For example, the advent of wearable devices supported by mobile technology, can now allow a doctor to monitor a patient’s vitals remotely. This technology has in-built patient monitoring devices which provide information on heart rhythm, blood pressure, breathing patterns and blood glucose level,” he informed.

Raghuvanshi is also in favour of technology. He replies, “Technology is transforming the healthcare sector in India. It can improve our long-term health by tackling a number of issues. It has already helped us to develop improved medicines and drug dosage combinations, screen patients better, detect diseases early, perform complex surgical interventions, etc. AI is a major technological breakthrough for the medical space. It allows for the creation of a personalised environment for both patients as well as healthcare providers. Many healthcare experts anticipate that operationalising AI will result in a 10 to 15 per cent increase in productivity over the next two years.”

Mentioning further innovations, he said that big data is another area which will allow for preventive care. “It will also allow for analytical solutions which will give insight into treatment viability, drug utilisation and self-care programmes, specific to chronic conditions. Blockchain will bring healthcare efficiencies by providing transparency in process, eliminating intermediaries wherever possible, providing a guard against counterfeit drugs and reducing unnecessary healthcare costs,” he added.

Getting a little deeper into technology, Venkataraman said, “Rapid developments in mobile technologies, cloud computing, digital imaging, machine learning and 3-D printing have paved the way for breakthroughs in the development and adoption of healthcare technologies – from telemedicine to nanotechnology, lab-grown 3-D organs to internet of things and electronic health records to AI. Besides, the use of data to build India-centric research (most of the research in the medical field is largely based on the Caucasian samples) is possible only through digitalisation.”

The importance of digital tools in healthcare is significant, as referred by Goel. He said, “Apart from clinical decision support tools, digital tools can make clinical expertise available either remotely or through expertise embedded in medical equipment. The examples include digital pathology, tele-radiology, point of care diagnostic devices, tele-consultation, etc. The second issue is to keep millions of frontline health workers updated about the latest knowledge and skills, where e-learning academies and virtual classrooms can be of great help. Thirdly, these can help in enhancing the quality and effectiveness of care being delivered on the ground by paramedic staff like Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers through the use of appropriate apps on e-pads/mobile phones.”

Ayushman Bharat and partnerships

Public-private partnership can be one of the solutions to resolve the problems that Indian healthcare faces. Venkataraman had a view that private-public partnership is the only way to solve India’s healthcare problem. The starting point for this, as in any partnership, has to be mutual trust and a recognition that the solution has to be a win-win for both.

According to him, there is a global crisis in healthcare. “The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that one billion people lack access to basic care, and a further 100 million are pushed into poverty trying to access it. There is a strong need for social entrepreneurship in healthcare. For success in healthcare, we need to turn the problem around from treatment to prevention. To bring a change, work has to be done at the community level. We need to look beyond the narrow roles of the state, business and patients to draw on our collective strength; social entrepreneurship may just hold the key,” he predicted.

Speaking along the same line, Dr Trehan said that Ayushman Bharat can exercise a transformative impact if implemented in an effective and coordinated manner. “It is important for the government and industry to develop partnerships with a focus on improving coverage and providing access to quality healthcare services to people. A continuum of care systems also needs to be established by linking hospitals with health centres and with the community,” he opined.

According to Raghuvanshi, Ayushman Bharat scheme is a radical shift as it reaches out to the poorest and the most vulnerable families, covering complex treatments, hospital stay costs, surgeries and procedures (in both public and private hospitals). “So far, 8,000 private hospitals have joined the programme but bigger, multi-specialty hospitals are

yet to step in to empanel. Private hospitals are still in the process of reviewing the viability of the rates of the different packages that have been offered under the scheme. The National Health Authority (NHA) has been requested to review these rates as they are far short of even basic rates for quality and don't cover even the direct costs of the surgeries. We will do our best to support in every way we can and look at different means of contributing or participating, such as offering skill training or education programmes," he informed.

When asked about the government's strategic plan to purchase services from the private sector, Dr Panda remarked, "This is a welcome move. The biggest service that can be purchased from private hospitals is to train young doctors and paramedical staff. This is a simple solution to the crisis of poor doctor-patient ratio in India. It would open up thousands of medical seats at no extra cost to the government, by allowing large private hospitals to train and award graduate and postgraduate degrees."

Key trends/policy interventions/innovations for healthcare 2020

In the next decade, India's healthcare sector will see a more matured digital base and effective policy intervention will streamline processes within the system as well as ensure quality access.

"There is an opportunity for India to skip a full generation and transform healthcare and healthcare delivery using digital technology. Healthcare can learn so many things from new-age businesses and transform India. We can and I am sure will choose this path and chart a track completely different from what the rest of the world has seen," Venkataraman stressed.

Goel expects that in 2020, policy interventions aimed to make healthcare more affordable will have the largest impact. The interventions include: scaling of already launched Ayushman Bharat, renewed effort by insurance companies to fix the pricing of healthcare services and expanding the coverage of Ayushman Bharat to include the middle class and senior citizens.

He elaborated that some policy interventions which could be triggered in 2020 to change the way healthcare systems are organised to enhance quality, accountability, patient satisfaction and efficiency in care delivery should include: quality measurement and improvement with public reporting of outcomes; interventions to support provider consolidation using strategic purchasing as a lever; corporatisation of public hospitals (creation of legal structures such as trust, state enterprise, etc which can separate these from government administration) — many such transitions have been carried out in countries like the UK, Sweden, Singapore — which could lead to better efficiency, quality and patient satisfaction.

Dr Trehan, adds, "In an overarching sense, I see virtual reality, big data, Internet of things (IoT), telehealth, robotics and genomics as areas which will define healthcare and exponentially impact its delivery to the masses.

Raghuvanshi brought into limelight the safety of healthcare providers for 2020. He said, “The Centre is ready with a draft Bill which makes assault of healthcare professionals a criminal offence with an imprisonment of up to five years and fine extending up to Rs 5 lakh. After numerous incidents of violence against doctors, the government has framed this important Bill which should become a law soon. The government is also considering lifting price curbs on new generation of stents more than two years after its directive on capping medical devices. A newly-constituted committee, headed by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), is reviewing if all drug-eluting stents (DES) are the same or whether a new category needs to be added. There is also a plan to base identification of patients on Aadhaar cards for maintaining health records. It also envisages a combination of health services access facilities through the India Health portal, My Health app and other social media platforms. These are all significant policy developments with respect to healthcare in India.”

Change is an inevitable fact of life. With the hope that the new decade will bring in the much needed positive change in Indian healthcare, the government, industry leaders, healthcare experts, doctors and other stakeholders have set their goals for the future. The only question that arises is that how soon will these efforts bear fruit?

Education

Education in India is primarily provided by public schools (controlled and funded by the government at three levels: central, state and local) and private schools. Under various articles of the Indian Constitution, free and compulsory education is provided as a fundamental right to children aged 6 to 14. The approximate ratio of public schools to private schools in India is 7:5.

In the 2011 Census, about 73% of the population was literate, with 81% for males and 65% for females. National Statistical Commission surveyed literacy to be 77.7% in 2017–18, 84.7% for male and 70.3% for female. This compares to 1981 when the respective rates were 41%, 53% and 29%. In 1951 the rates were 18%, 27% and 9%. India's improved education system is often cited as one of the main contributors to its economic development.

Much of the progress, especially in higher education and scientific research, has been credited to various public institutions. While enrollment in higher education has increased steadily over the past decade, reaching a Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of 26.3% in 2019, there still remains a significant distance to catch up with tertiary education enrolment levels of developed nations, a challenge that will be necessary to

overcome in order to continue to reap a demographic dividend from India's comparatively young population.

At the primary and secondary level, India has a large private school system complementing the government run schools, with 29% of students receiving private education in the 6 to 14 age group. Certain post-secondary technical schools are also private. The private education market in India had a revenue of US\$450 million in 2008, but is projected to be a US\$40 billion market.

Although there are private schools in India, they are highly regulated in terms of what they can teach, in what form they can operate (must be a non-profit to run any accredited educational institution) and all the other aspects of operation. Hence, the differentiation of government schools and private schools can be misleading.

In January 2019, India had over 900 universities and 40,000 colleges. In India's higher education system, a significant number of seats are reserved under affirmative action policies for the historically disadvantaged Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes. In universities, colleges, and similar institutions affiliated to the federal government, there is a maximum 50% of reservations applicable to these disadvantaged groups, at the state level it can vary. Maharashtra had 73% reservation in 2014, which is the highest percentage of reservations in India.

Types of schools

Government schools

The majority of students study in government schools where poor and vulnerable students study for free until the age of 14. An Education Ministry data, 65.2% (113 million,) of all school students in 20 states go to government schools (c. 2017). These include schools run by the state and local government as well as the centre government. Example of large centre government run school systems are Kendriya Vidyalaya in urban areas, Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, for the gifted students, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya for girls belonging to vulnerable SC/ST/OBC classes, Indian Army Public Schools run by the Indian Army for the children of soldiers.

Kendriya Vidyalaya project, was started for the employees of the central government of India, who are deployed throughout the country. The government started the *Kendriya Vidyalaya* project in 1965 to provide uniform education in institutions following the same syllabus at the same pace regardless of the location to which the employee's family has been transferred.

Government aided private schools

These are usually charitable trust run schools that receive partial funding from the government. Largest system of aided schools is run by D.A.V. College Managing Committee.

Private schools (unaided)

According to current estimate, 29% of Indian children are privately educated. With more than 50% children enrolling in private schools in urban areas, the balance has already tilted towards private schooling in cities; and, even in rural areas, nearly 20% of the children in 2004-5 were enrolled in private schools.

Vocational education

India's All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) reported, in 2013, that there are more than 4,599 vocational institutions that offer degrees, diploma and post-diploma in architecture, engineering, hotel management, infrastructure, pharmacy, technology, town services and others. There were 1740,000 students enrolled in these schools. Total annual intake capacity for technical diplomas and degrees exceeded 3.4 million in 2012

According to the University Grants Commission (UGC) total enrolment in Science, Medicine, Agriculture and Engineering crossed 65 lakh in 2010. The number of women choosing engineering has more than doubled since 2001.

Technical education

From the first Five-year Plan onwards, India's emphasis was to develop a pool of scientifically inclined manpower. India's National Policy on Education (NPE) provisioned for an apex body for regulation and development of higher technical education, which came into being as the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) in 1987 through an act of the Indian parliament. At the federal level, the Indian Institutes of Technology, the Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology, the National Institutes of Technology and the Indian Institutes of Information Technology are deemed of national importance.

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and National Institutes of Technology (NITs) are among the nation's premier education facilities.

Major Issues in our Education Systems

Facilities

As per 2016 Annual Survey of Education Report (ASER), 3.5% schools in India had no toilet facility while only 68.7% schools had usable toilet facility. 75.5% of the schools surveyed had library in 2016, a decrease from 78.1% in 2014. Percentage of schools with separate girls toilet have increased from 32.9% in 2010 to 61.9% in 2016. 74.1% schools had drinking water facility and 64.5% of the schools had playground.

Curriculum issues

Modern education in India is often criticised for being based on rote learning rather than problem solving. *New Indian Express* says that Indian Education system seems to be producing zombies since in most of the schools students seemed to be spending majority of their time in preparing for competitive exams rather than learning or playing. *BusinessWeek* criticises the Indian curriculum, saying it revolves around rote learning and *ExpressIndia* suggests that students are focused on cramming. *Preschool for Child Rights* states that almost 99% of pre-schools do not have any curriculum at all. Also creativity is not encouraged or is considered as a form of entertainment in most institutions.

Rural education

Following independence, India viewed education as an effective tool for bringing social change through community development. The administrative control was effectively

initiated in the 1950s, when, in 1952, the government grouped villages under a Community Development Block—an authority under national programme which could control education in up to 100 villages. A Block Development Officer oversaw a geographical area of 150 square miles (390 km²) which could contain a population of as many as 70,000 people.

Setty and Ross elaborate on the role of such programmes, themselves divided further into *individual-based*, *community based*, or the *Individual-cum-community-based*, in which microscopic levels of development are overseen at village level by an appointed worker:

The community development programmes comprise agriculture, animal husbandry, cooperation, rural industries, rural engineering (consisting of minor irrigation, roads, buildings), health and sanitation including family welfare, family planning, women welfare, child care and nutrition, education including adult education, social education and literacy, youth welfare and community organisation. In each of these areas of development there are several programmes, schemes and activities which are additive, expanding and tapering off covering the total community, some segments, or specific target populations such as small and marginal farmers, artisans, women and in general people below the poverty line.

Despite some setbacks the rural education programmes continued throughout the 1950s, with support from private institutions. A sizeable network of rural education had been established by the time the *Gandhigram Rural Institute* was established and 5,200 Community Development Blocks were established in India. Nursery schools, elementary schools, secondary school, and schools for adult education for women were set up.

The government continued to view rural education as an agenda that could be relatively free from bureaucratic backlog and general stagnation. However, in some cases lack of financing balanced the gains made by rural education institutes of India. Some ideas failed to find acceptability among India's poor and investments made by the government sometimes yielded little results. Today, government rural schools remain poorly funded and understaffed. Several foundations, such as the Rural Development Foundation (Hyderabad), actively build high-quality rural schools, but the number of students served is small.

Education in rural India is valued differently from in an urban setting, with lower rates of completion. An imbalanced sex ratio exists within schools with 18% of males earning a high school diploma compared with only 10% of females. The estimated number of children who have never attended school in India is near 100 million which reflects the low completion levels. This is the largest concentration in the world of youth who haven't enrolled in school.

Women's education

Women have a much lower literacy rate than men. Far fewer girls are enrolled in the schools, and many of them drop out. In the patriarchal setting of the Indian family, girls have lower status and fewer privileges than boys. Conservative cultural attitudes prevent some girls from attending school. Furthermore, educated high class women are

less likely than uneducated low class women to enter the workforce They opt to stay at home due to the traditional, cultural and religious norms.

The number of literate women among the female population of India was between 2–6% from the British Raj onwards to the formation of the Republic of India in 1947. Concerted efforts led to improvement from 15.3% in 1961 to 28.5% in 1981. By 2001 literacy for women had exceeded 50% of the overall female population, though these statistics were still very low compared to world standards and even male literacy within India. Recently the Indian government has launched **Saakshar Bharat Mission for Female Literacy**. This mission aims to bring down female illiteracy by half of its present level.

In India, there is a large disparity between female literacy rates in different states. State of Kerala has the highest female literacy rate of 91.98% while Rajasthan has the lowest female literacy rate of 52.66. This correlates to the health levels of states, Kerala has average life expectancy at birth of 74.9 while Rajasthan's average life expectancy at birth is 67.7 years.

In India, higher education is defined as the education of an age group between 18 and 24, and is largely funded by the government. Despite women making up 24–50% of higher education enrolment, there is still a gender imbalance within higher education. Only one third of science students and 7% of engineering students, are women. In comparison, however, over half the students studying Education are women.

Employer training

Only 10% of manufacturers in India offer in-service training to their employees, compared with over 90% in China.

Teacher careers

In the Indian education system, a teacher's success is loosely defined. It is either based on a student's success or based on the years of teaching experience, both of which do not necessarily correlate to a teacher's skill set or competencies. The management of an institution could thereby be forced to promote teachers based on the grade level they teach or their seniority, both of which are often not an indicator of a good teacher. This means that either a primary school teacher is promoted to a higher grade, or a teacher is promoted to take up other roles within the institution such as Head of Department, coordinator, Vice Principal or Principal. However, the skills and competencies that are required for each of them vary and a great teacher may not be a great manager. Since teachers do not see their own growth and success in their own hands, they often do not take up any professional development. Thus, there is a need to identify a framework to help a teacher chart a career path based on his/her own competency and help him/her understand his/her own development.

Coaching

Increased competition to get admission in reputed colleges has given rise to private coaching institutes in India. They prepare students for engineering, medical, MBA,

SAT, GRE, banking jobs' entrance tests. There are also coaching institutes that teach subjects like English for employment in India and abroad.

Private coaching institutes are of two types: offline coaching and online coaching. There are many online coaching centres and apps available in the market and their usage is growing, especially in tier 2 metro cities.

Corruption in education

Corruption in Indian education system has been eroding the quality of education and has been creating long-term negative consequences for the society. Educational corruption in India is considered as one of the major contributors to domestic black money.

Grade inflation

Grade inflation has become an issue in Indian secondary education. In CBSE, a 95 percent aggregate is 21 times as prevalent today as it was in 2004, and a 90 percent close to nine times as prevalent. In the ISC Board, a 95 percent is almost twice as prevalent today as it was in 2012. CBSE called a meeting of all 40 school boards early in 2017 to urge them to discontinue "artificial spiking of marks". CBSE decided to lead by example and promised not to inflate its results. But although the 2017 results have seen a small correction, the board has clearly not discarded the practice completely. Almost 6.5 percent of mathematics examinees in 2017 scored 95 or more – 10 times higher than in 2004 – and almost 6 percent of physics examinees scored 95 or more, 35 times more than in 2004.

Initiatives by the Government

Following India's independence, a number of rules were formulated for the backward Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes of India. In 1960, a list identifying 405 Scheduled Castes and 225 Scheduled Tribes was published by the central government. An amendment was made to the list in 1975, which identified 841 Scheduled Castes and 510 Scheduled Tribes. The total percentage of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes combined was found to be 22.5% with the Scheduled Castes accounting for 17% and the Scheduled Tribes accounting for the remaining 7.5%. Following the report many Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes increasingly referred to themselves as *Dalit*, a Marathi language terminology used by B R Ambedkar which literally means "oppressed".

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are provided for in many of India's educational programmes. Special reservations are also provided for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India, e.g. a reservation of 15% in *Kendriya Vidyalaya* for Scheduled Castes and another reservation of 7.5% in *Kendriya Vidyalaya* for Scheduled Tribes.

Women from remote, underdeveloped areas or from weaker social groups in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Kerala, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, fall under the *Mahila Samakhyas Scheme*, initiated in 1989.

Legislative framework

Article 45, of the Constitution of India originally stated:

The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.

This article was a directive principle of state policy within India, effectively meaning that it was within a set of rules that were meant to be followed in spirit and the government could not be held to court if the actual letter was not followed. However, the enforcement of this directive principle became a matter of debate since this principle held obvious emotive and practical value, and was legally the only directive principle within the Indian constitution to have a time limit.

Following initiatives by the Supreme Court of India during the 1990s the 93rd amendment bill suggested three separate amendments to the Indian constitution:

The constitution of India was amended to include a new article, 21A, which read:

The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in a such manner as the State may, by law, determine.

Article 45 was proposed to be substituted by the article which read:

Provision for early childhood care and education to children below the age of six years: The State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of sixteen years.

Another article, 51A, was to additionally have the clause:

...a parent or guardian [shall] provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, [a] ward between the age of six to fourteen years.

The bill was passed unanimously in the *Lok Sabha*, the lower house of the Indian parliament, on 28 November 2001. It was later passed by the upper house—the *Rajya Sabha*—on 14 May 2002. After being signed by the President of India the Indian constitution was amended formally for the eighty sixth time and the bill came into effect. Since then those between the age of 6–14 have a *fundamental right* to education.

Article 46 of the Constitution of India holds that:

The State shall promote, with special care, the education and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of social exploitation'.^[106]

Other provisions for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes can be found in Articles 330, 332, 335, 338–342. Both the 5th and the 6th Schedules of the Constitution also make special provisions for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

New Education Policy (2020)

The new National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) introduced by the central government is expected to bring profound changes to education in India. The policy approved by the Union Cabinet of India on 29 July 2020, outlines the vision of India's

new education system. The new policy replaces the 1986 National Policy on Education. The policy is a comprehensive framework for elementary education to higher education as well as vocational training in both rural and urban India. The policy aims to transform India's education system by 2021.

Shortly after the release of the policy, the government clarified that no one will be forced to study any particular language and that the medium of instruction will not be shifted from English to any regional language. The language policy in NEP is a broad *guideline* and *advisory* in nature; and it is up to the states, institutions, and schools to decide on the implementation. Education in India is a Concurrent List subject.

The major change envisaged by the policy will be in early education where 10+2 format will be replaced by **5+3+3+4** (or **5+3+3+2+2** or **3+2+3+3+2+2**). 5+3+3+4 refers to 5 foundational years, whether in an *anganwadi*, pre-school or *balvatika*. This is followed by 3 years of preparatory learning from classes 3 to 5. This is followed by a middle stage that is of 3 years length and finally a 4 year secondary stage upto class 12 or 18 years of age. This model will be implemented as follows:

1. Foundational Stage

Pre-primary|Pre-primary schooling (5+)

It divides the foundational stage into two parts (age of 3–8), 3 years of preschool (Anganwadi) and two years of primary classes 1–2. Now students can start their education at age of 3. The focus of studies will be in activity-based learning.

2. Preparatory Stage

Primary school|Primary schooling (3+)

After pre-primary education, students will enter primary education in the age group of 8–11 years, where they will study in classes 3–5. Teachers will put more emphasis on the students; health, analytical skills, mathematical approach, reasoning, logical thinking and creative thinking. Classes will be more engaging and pedantic than book-based learning. It will gradually introduce subjects like speaking, reading, writing, physical education, languages, art, science and mathematics.

3. Middle Stage

Secondary schooling (3+)

From class 6th (age of 11–14 years) onward additional vocational programs will be added. That will provide deeper and practical knowledge in subjects like sciences, mathematics, arts, social sciences, and humanities, etc.

4. Senior secondary education|Senior secondary schooling (4)

After completing class 8th, the students will join senior secondary school between 14 and 18 years. It is again subdivided into two parts: classes 9 and 10 covering the first phase while classes 11 and 12 covering the second phase. These 4 years of study are intended to inculcate multidisciplinary study, coupled with depth and critical thinking. Multiple options of subjects will be provided.

Everything about New Education Policy 2020

What purpose does an NEP serve?

An NEP is a comprehensive framework to guide the development of education in the country. The need for a policy was first felt in 1964 when Congress MP Siddheshwar Prasad criticised the then government for lacking a vision and philosophy for education. The same year, a 17-member Education Commission, headed by then UGC Chairperson D S Kothari, was constituted to draft a national and coordinated policy on education. Based on the suggestions of this Commission, Parliament passed the first education policy in 1968.

A new NEP usually comes along every few decades. India has had three to date. The first came in 1968 and the second in 1986, under Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi respectively; the NEP of 1986 was revised in 1992 when P V Narasimha Rao was Prime Minister. The third is the NEP released Wednesday under the Prime Ministership of Narendra Modi.

What are the key takeaways?

The NEP proposes sweeping changes including opening up of Indian higher education to foreign universities, dismantling of the UGC and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), introduction of a four-year multidisciplinary undergraduate programme with multiple exit options, and discontinuation of the M Phil programme. In school education, the policy focuses on overhauling the curriculum, “easier” Board exams, a reduction in the syllabus to retain “core essentials” and thrust on “experiential learning and critical thinking”.

In a significant shift from the 1986 policy, which pushed for a 10+2 structure of school education, the new NEP pitches for a “5+3+3+4” design corresponding to the age groups 3-8 years (foundational stage), 8-11 (preparatory), 11-14 (middle), and 14-18 (secondary). This brings early childhood education (also known as pre-school education for children of ages 3 to 5) under the ambit of formal schooling. The mid-day meal programme will be extended to pre-school children. The NEP says students until Class 5 should be taught in their mother tongue or regional language.

The policy also proposes phasing out of all institutions offering single streams and that all universities and colleges must aim to become multidisciplinary by 2040.

How will these reforms be implemented?

The NEP only provides a broad direction and is not mandatory to follow. Since education is a concurrent subject (both the Centre and the state governments can make laws on it), the reforms proposed can only be implemented collaboratively by the Centre and the states. This will not happen immediately. The incumbent government has set a target of 2040 to implement the entire policy. Sufficient funding is also crucial; the 1968 NEP was hamstrung by a shortage of funds.

The government plans to set up subject-wise committees with members from relevant ministries at both the central and state levels to develop implementation plans for each aspect of the NEP. The plans will list out actions to be taken by multiple bodies, including the HRD Ministry, state Education Departments, school Boards, NCERT,

Central Advisory Board of Education and National Testing Agency, among others. Planning will be followed by a yearly joint review of progress against targets set.

Do all states need to follow it?

What does the emphasis on mother tongue/regional language mean for English-medium schools?

Such emphasis is not new: Most government schools in the country are doing this already. As for private schools, it's unlikely that they will be asked to change their medium of instruction. A senior ministry official clarified that the provision on mother tongue as medium of instruction was not compulsory for states. "Education is a concurrent subject. Which is why the policy clearly states that kids will be taught in their mother tongue or regional language 'wherever possible'," the officer said.

What about people in transferable jobs, or children of multilingual parents?

The NEP doesn't say anything specifically on children of parents with transferable jobs, but acknowledges children living in multilingual families: "Teachers will be encouraged to use a bilingual approach, including bilingual teaching-learning materials, with those students whose home language may be different from the medium of instruction."

How does the government plan to open up higher education to foreign players?

The document states universities from among the top 100 in the world will be able to set up campuses in India. While it doesn't elaborate the parameters to define the top 100, the incumbent government may use the 'QS World University Rankings' as it has relied on these in the past while selecting universities for the 'Institute of Eminence' status. However, none of this can start unless the HRD Ministry brings in a new law that includes details of how foreign universities will operate in India.

It is not clear if a new law would entice the best universities abroad to set up campuses in India. In 2013, at the time the UPA-II was trying to push a similar Bill, The Indian Express had reported that the top 20 global universities, including Yale, Cambridge, MIT and Stanford, University of Edinburgh and Bristol, had shown no interest in entering the Indian market.

Participation of foreign universities in India is currently limited to them entering into collaborative twinning programmes, sharing faculty with partnering institutions and offering distance education. Over 650 foreign education providers have such arrangements in India.

How will the four-year multidisciplinary bachelor's programme work?

This pitch, interestingly, comes six years after Delhi University was forced to scrap such a four-year undergraduate programme at the incumbent government's behest. Under the four-year programme proposed in the new NEP, students can exit after one year with a certificate, after two years with a diploma, and after three years with a bachelor's degree. "Four-year bachelor's programmes generally include a certain amount of research work and the student will get deeper knowledge in the subject he or she decides to major in. After four years, a BA student should be able to enter a research degree programme directly depending on how well he or she has performed... However, master's degree programmes will continue to function as they do, following which student may choose to carry on for a PhD programme," said scientist and former UGC chairman V S Chauhan.

What impact will doing away with the M Phil programme have?

Chauhan said this should not affect the higher education trajectory at all. “In normal course, after a master’s degree a student can register for a PhD programme. This is the current practice almost all over the world. In most universities, including those in the UK (Oxford, Cambridge and others), M Phil was a middle research degree between a master’s and a PhD. Those who have entered MPhil, more often than not ended their studies with a PhD degree. MPhil degrees have slowly been phased out in favour of a direct PhD programme.”

Will the focus on multiple disciplines not dilute the character of single-stream institutions, such as IITs?

The IITs are already moving in that direction. IIT-Delhi has a humanities department and set up a public policy department recently. IIT-Kharagpur has a School of Medical Science and Technology. Asked about multiple disciplines, IIT-Delhi director V Ramgopal Rao said, “Some of the best universities in the US such as MIT have very strong humanities departments. Take the case of a civil engineer. Knowing how to build a dam is not going to solve a problem. He needs to know the environmental and social impact of building the dam. Many engineers are also becoming entrepreneurs. Should they not know something about economics? A lot more factors go into anything related to engineering today.”

Corruption In Administration: Need For Effective Vigilance

The Present Level of Corruption Rampant and wide-spread corruption, both in the public services and as also among holders of high political offices, is undoubtedly a matter of serious national concern. Although brave words to ‘wage war’ against corruption, ‘no compromise’ on corruption and ‘not to spare any corrupt person, however high’ have, time and again, been voiced by all top leaders of different political parties in power at the Centre and in the States, there has been little dent on corruption or corrupt individuals. In fact, corruption has become more common and deep-rooted.

It has also engulfed larger number of persons holding high public offices during the last one decade. It is now galloping unchecked and unhindered. Many scams and scandals recently reported in the press in great details are enough proof of this ever-worsening situation due to near total lack of effective vigilance.

Corruption during Second World War Times

The problem of corruption in administration and the public initially became glaring during World War II years (1939-45). Massive war supplies and contracts running into lakhs of rupees (huge amounts of those times), war time shortages and rationing of essential articles of daily use provided unprecedented opportunities to make quick money by unscrupulous suppliers, contractors and traders.

Many government servants were tempted and bribed by them to obtain speedier approvals and payments for completed works and supplies of even low quality and substandard goods. To check this kind of corruption, a special police force at the Central level, known as “The Delhi Special Police Establishment’ (DSPE) was set up in 1941 and was given statutory status by enacting the DSPE Act 1946.

In April 1963, creation of CBI, the DSPE became a part of this larger anti-corruption police organisation.

Corruption in Post-Independence Period

This position, however, changed radically after Independence assumption of power by the elected leaders. The launching of the economic development Five Year Plans from 1951 onwards phenomenally increased government spending.

Banking and Insurance Sectors came under government ownership and control. Numerous large and medium size PSUs were set up. “Licence, quota, ad Permit Raj” came into being in areas of economy left open for the private sector.

All these provided ample opportunities for making large illegal gains by corruption-prone ministers and public servants at all levels by abusing their offices and powers. Numerous ‘middle men’ and peddlers of influence too emerged to facilitate corruption and to share the booty at the cost of the public exchequer.

Many kinds of ‘White Collar’ or economic offences in violation of the numerous new fiscal laws, like the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA), The Import Export (Control) Act, The Customs and Excise Act, The Income Tax Act, The Industrial Licencing Act, etc., provided additional avenues of corruption.

Remedial Measures since Independence

Santhanam Committee Report

The Santhanam Committee, appointed in 1962 to study the growing problem of corruption and to suggest remedial measures stated in its report of 1964 as below: “We heard from all sides that corruption has in recent years spread even to those levels of administration from which it was conspicuously absent in the past”. It also reported: “There is a wide spread impression.....that some ministers who have held office during the last 16 years have enriched themselves illegitimately, obtained good jobs for their sons and relations through nepotism, and have reaped other advantages inconsistent with any notion of purity in public life”.

To be able tackle corruption among officials, the Committee stated that “absolute integrity on the part of ministers at the Centre and the states is an indispensable condition for establishment of a tradition of purity in public services”. It, thus, gave priority to prevent political corruption.

To tackle the problem of rising corruption among ministers, the Santhanam Committee recommended that specific allegations against any of them should be promptly investigated by “an agency whose findings would command respect”.

Indecision on Creation of Lokpal

No action was, however, taken on the above said recommendation as obviously the ruling political class did not like to be subjected to any independent probe by an outside body. Even the later recommendations of the Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) of 1966 to set up the institution of Lokpal to investigate alleged cases of political corruption against ministers at the Centre has yet to be implemented. Five times in the past (i.e., in 1968, 1971, 1977, 1979

and 1985) some kind of Lokpal Bill were introduced in Parliament but these were cleverly allowed to lapse. The sixth and the latest Lokpal Bill of 1996 is still pending in Parliament.

The new bill provides for a very weak and inactive Lokpal who may turn out to be a protector of the corruption charged politicians instead of punishing them. In the proposed law, this Lokpal watch-dog has been made incapable of 'barking' against corruption or 'biting' the corrupt.

Diluted Version of Central Vigilance Commission

To deal with high level administrative corruption, the Santhanam Committee had recommended setting up of an independent Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), keeping ministers out of its purview, but bring all public servants of the Central Government and its PSUs within its jurisdiction.

The Commission was to be given a statutory basis by a suitable parliamentary law "after suitable period of experiment". Under CVC recommended by the Committee, the Commission was to be vested with powers to investigate complaints "that a public servant: (i) has exercised his powers for improper or corrupt purposes; or (ii) has unjustifiably or corruptly refrained from exercising his powers". For discharging this function effectively, the Commission was to be legally empowered "to initiate, conduct and complete such action as may be considered appropriate, including prosecution against a public servant found guilty" after preliminary investigation of the complaints by the Commission. Powers to decide to initiate disciplinary action or prosecution was to be vested in the Commission itself by withdrawing these powers presently vested government. In addition, it was recommended that the CVC should, by suitable legislation, be given powers that could be exercised by a Commission of Inquiry appointed under the Commission of Inquiry Act 1952 so that he may undertake "any inquiry relating to transactions in which public servants are suspected or alleged to have acted improperly or in a corrupt manner".

Unfortunately, the CVC scheme finally accepted and notified by Government by a resolution of 1964 fell far short of the Committee's recommendations. The basic weakness of this scheme, which is still in force, is that it has no statutory basis yet.

It continues to be the creature of 1964 Government Resolution which is liable to frequent changes at government's sweet will.

Measures Necessary to Effectively Tackle Corruption

Thus, at present, neither for prevention of political nor administrative corruption is there any effective and independent vigilance mechanism which may inspire public confidence. If government of the day is serious to tackle the problem of "wide-spread" corruption, the following measures need to be taken:

1. Establishment of the Lokpal institution to deal with political corruption with suo moto power of initiating action against corruption suspect central ministers and MPs.
2. The Lokpal should have its own independent investigating and prosecuting agency without having to depend on the CBI.

3. The Lokpal should have legal powers to prosecute an accused minister in specially designated courts after a prima facie case is established against him by the Lokpal's own inquiry.
4. The charged minister must compulsorily resign after filing of the charge-sheet in the trial court.
5. The CVC should also be made a statutory body by a Parliamentary Law and redesignated as the Central Lokayukta.
6. The Central Lokayukta could be appropriately linked to the Lokpal by making provisions of sharing or having common officers, staff, investigating and prosecuting agencies.
7. The proposed Central Lokayukta should have the powers to finally decide on initiation of disciplinary action or prosecution against any public servant after a prima facie case is established by his own inquiry.

Creation of Independent and Empowered Vigilance Bodies with Supporting Agencies

Unless such independent and duly empowered vigilance bodies are established, there is little chance of preventing or controlling high-level corruption. Experience so far has shown that neither the existing anti-corruption law nor the CBI, nor anti-corruption police have been of much use in investigating, preventing and penalising corruption among holders of high political offices.

After the Lokayukta in the States and the proposed Central Lokpal are installed, with their own independent investigating and prosecuting agencies, the CBI could continue to be under Government with its limited role of exercising internal vigilance on the lower and middle categories of public servants with the knowledge and approval of their heads of departments.

Empowering Heads of Departments

The ultimate responsibilities to check administrative corruption of their subordinates should lie with the Secretaries to Government and Heads of Departments.

Use of Police only Under Judicial Control

The police's use for surveillance, detection and investigation of corruption suspect persons should be on the approval of the appropriate civil or judicial authorities only. Unfortunately, the police in India, validly or otherwise, does not enjoy the reputation of being objective, just and fair-minded.

Responsive Administration: Citizen Administration Interface

Citizen friendly administration

Man evolved a system of regulating and even controlling his life when, after discarding a life of isolation and loneliness he began co-existing with fellow human beings. The development of the community thus induced him to contrive a pattern of governance to direct his affairs. From such a viewpoint, government can be considered

as old as society itself-ushering government into society as well as society in government.

Of all the forms of government practised by mankind, democracy has been the youngest. Democracy, in the modern institutional form, first originated in Great Britain. But it is only in the present twentieth century that democracy is able to acquire its representative character. This democracy in its earlier phase was an open-ended oligarchy. Blacks did not enjoy the right to vote. Women were enfranchised in various countries only between the two World Wars. France enfranchised its women as late as 1945. Belgium conferred voting rights on its women in 1949. In a cross-cultural study on democracy conducted in 1951 by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). It triumphantly concluded: 'For the first time in history, democracy is claimed as the proper, ideal description of all systems of political and social organisation'. Democracy proved to be an expanding phenomenon.

Democracy as visualised, even practised was political its external symbols being periodic elections based on adult franchise with no discrimination based on religion, race, sex or beliefs. Freedom of expression was unabridged.

This conception of democracy was discovered to be narrow, weak and inadequate with the passage of time. Democracy, in order to be viable and acceptable, was to include and articulate social and economic concerns also. Society, was moving from individualism to collectivism, which could not but influence the agenda of democracy also.

Paradigm Shift

Democracy is a dynamic, even demanding concept, newer static in its contents and connotations. Since the eighties a new wave is in evidence of which the most notable feature is a shift from mere government to GOVERNANCE. The latter is a broader concept covering themes like judicial review, due process, public interest litigation.

Newer Concerns such as ethics in administration, accountability, openness, client-friendliness etc. animate or inmate public administrations. Among these new vibrations rank RESPONSIVE ADMINISTRATION. The term became popular since 1946 when a conference of chief secretaries of states was organised in Delhi at the instance of the late Prime Minister. The Department given the responsibility of promoting this attribute is the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances in the Government of India.

Responsive Administration may not be confused with responsible government. These two terms are organically inter-linked and inter-twined. But they are separate. Responsible Government is a political concept and carries a definite connotation. It is a macro-concept. Responsive administration is basically animated at the cutting age of public administration. It is micro level concept deriving its credibility and validity from the delivery system of a country's public administration. Responsive administration is best defined by Mahatma Gandhi.

Mahatma Gandhi said, 'I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt or when the self becomes too much with you, try the following expedient. Recall the face of the poorest and the most helpless man whom you may have seen and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to Swaraj or self-rule for the

hungry and spiritually starving millions of our countrymen? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away’.

Responsive administration is an apparently moral concept in public administration in as much as it calls for public functionaries’ and accountability directly to the people. Responsive administration entails mechanism of redressal of grievances also. Mahatma’s talisman, thus, is the acid test of responsive administration. Citizen empowerment constitutes the single most critical element of responsive administration.

Hindrance

The problem of administrative responsiveness is to be addressed within the larger social context. The present national scenario has to reckon with certain parameters of which the two are of paramount concern.

1. First is economic liberalisation to which India is firmly committed since the nineties.
2. The second parameter in the governing framework is the constitutionalisation of local government as a result of the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments.

Responsiveness is to be operationalised within this larger context.

3. Contents of Responsive Administration.

Citizen satisfaction is also described by a catchy expression such as ‘service with a smile, not by a mile’. Since seventies particularly public administration is showing growing-interest in customers (or consumer) satisfaction measured in the quality of service delivery, client perception of service quality and consumer satisfaction. Quality of service in public administration is reported to be poor even in industrialised countries of the West and what is worse it is deteriorating despite the existence of free market. In developing countries like India, the quality of services is appalling.

4. Responsive administration explicitly acknowledges the citizen-sovereignty in administrative dealings and relationships. This orientation is its chief component, the other being well-defined constitutional mechanisms for redressed of citizen grievances.

Public administration is already seeing the emergence of devices like representative bureaucracy, lok adalats, consumer courts, citizens’ Charter etc. These must be strengthened and made effective. A citizens’ charter laid down a code of practice in delivery systems. It seeks to re-define the citizen as a customer and improves responsiveness and performance in the public services. It establishes minimum standards of public service reflecting the following six principles of social rights: fair treatment, entitlement, participation, openness, public administration, cooperation.

Excellence of administration

Responsive administration is a concept which needs emulation in all administrations. Its need is however much more obvious in a developing country like India with its long colonial background resting on stiff-necked bureaucracy attributes of responsive administration must. Thus permeate all levels and sectors of public administration but the need for citizen-friendly administration is most pressing at the cutting edge of administration: the countless points where administration and citizen daily meet. At present, in most parts of the country, the contact points between citizen

and administration are virtually a hacking point: a point of apparently endless harassment for the people, especially those who are on the fringe of development.

This, among others, calls for attitudinal change in the country's bureaucracy, and no where perhaps it is more necessary than in those constituting field of administration. The field level professionals are called upon to cultivate citizen-oriented attitudes. In addition, they must also possess and continually cultivate higher measures of administrative skills and subject matter capabilities. This calls for larger-scale changes in the public personnel practices and strengthening of the present tenure system. District administration must need to be rejuvenated and activated to enlist the good will of the local people.

Responsive administration is ensured in what has come to be known as the Batho Pele Principles. These principles put the citizens first in a search for efficient public service delivery. These principles were proclaimed by South Africa in 1997. These are:

1. *Service standard*: Citizens should be told what level and quality of public services, they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect.
2. *Access*: All citizens should have equal access to the services, which they are entitled, for example, increasing access of public services for those who have not previously received them. Many people who live in remote areas can be reached by setting up mobile units and redeploying facilities and resources closer to those in greatest need.
3. *Ensuring courtesy*: Citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration.
4. *Providing more and better information*: Citizens should be given full, accurate information about the public services they are entitled to receive, especially those who have previously been excluded from the provision of public services.
5. *Increasing openness and transparency*: Citizens should be told how national and provincial departments are run, how much they cost and who is in charge.
6. *Remedying mistake and failures (redress)*: If the promised standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation and a speedy and effective remedy and when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response.
7. *Getting the best possible value for money*: Public services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give citizens the best possible value for money.
8. *Consultation*: Citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of the public services they receive and where possible, should be given a chance about the services that are offered. It is important that consultations not only cover aspects about services currently provided but also about the services of new basic services to those who lack them. In that way, consultation can help to foster a more participative and cooperative relationship between the providers and receivers of public services.

Policymaking should show sensitiveness to citizen's problems and must not be influenced by extra-national interests. Here, I must make a mention of the new economic policy underway since 1990 requiring cultivation of new skills, knowledge and orientations and new equilibrium between administration and the people.

Changing Face of Public Administration in the Context Of Liberalisation, Globalisation And Privatisation

Introduction

Public Administration as a Government in action has been integrally tied to the nature of government in a specific context. There are material, economic, social, and politico-ideological contexts that influence the extent and nature of governmental involvement in societal problem solving. The character and requirements of the regime shaped Indian public administration during colonial rule. After Independence, the context of administration changed radically as government, in a situation of resource constraint, had to work towards planned socio-economic development in as short a time as possible. 'Development' took the Centre-stage in Indian administration immediately after the start of independent political life.

Since 1991, the context of administration has again been changing under the impact of the New Economic Policy. Concepts like 'globalisation', 'liberalisation', and 'privatisation' have gained wide currency that are indicative of more openness of government of international competition, deregulation and dismantling of a series of government controls, and downsizing of government by handing over selected activities to the private sector, and by encouraging the non-government organisation to work more and more in the social development sector, particularly in such fields as health, education, women's development, etc.

Changing Character of Public Administration

World War II had a major impact on intellectual developments in public administration analysis and theory. It triggered a search for more precise quantitative analysis and operations research techniques for application to public decision-making. Another important development is the virtual resurrection of the Hawthorne findings—that public organisations are complex social institutions embedded in wider social environment.

In case of third world countries, newer insights into implementation analysis have been particularly useful, as most development planning exercises boiled down to successful implementation of at the field level. There was clear research evidence to suggest that many well-planned social programmes failed to achieve the desired results because of lack of proper implementation.

Implementation Analysis and Research

The first generation implementation basically took a top-down approach. It was conceived that goals and objectives set by the top level and the only legitimate ones, and any departure from these exemplifies implementation failures. This kind of top-down vision led to the recommendation for fewer and clearer goals and virtual banishment of politics from the administrative process.

Whereas the second-generation implementation research challenged the top-down view and argued that in course of implementation, changes in programmes are only natural and even desirable. This led to the origin of 'bottom-up' approach that acknowledged the need for finding effective ways of realising policy objectives in diverse local situations. In this approach, the local needs of clients receive priority. The field workers in a hierarchic set up are not considered inert and passive; rather they are looked at as possessors of important policy insights, which the top management

generally lacks. This view, known as ‘backward mapping’ suggests that the workers at the street level are more familiar with the problems encountered in programme implementation, and their role in policy making must be recognised. The bottom-up approach has surely sensitised the administration to the need for local level autonomy.

Flexibility as the Hallmark of Implementation Success

Research on programme implementation has clearly brought out the fact of local adjustment of implementation process to suit peculiarities of local needs.

- 1) It is flexibility, not rigidity that makes for success of an implementation exercise.
- 2) Modifying the classical model of politics-administration dichotomy, administrative analysts have drawn attention to intermeshing of politics and administration in real life.
- 3) In Public Administration analysis, it is admitted that the classical concepts of rigid hierarchical supervision, inflexibility in decision-making, mechanical enforcement of top-level directives, and avoidance of ‘politics’ in administrative operations do not fit in with the realities on the ground.
- 4) Operational flexibility, self-correcting or adaptive organisations in pursuit of continuous learning and change-orientation are some of the hallmarks of contemporary public administration.

Distinction between Macro and Micro Administration

Another important feature of public administration today is the distinction between the public macro and micro administration. Classical public administrative principles and structural concepts of administration or human relational ideas were all formulated with reference to the internal design and working conditions of an organisation. It was micro-administration that concerned the theorist of classical public administration. The central objective of classical administrative theory had been to explain how people in an organisation worked toward achievement of goals set by top management.

But later-day public administration focussed attention on macro-administration consisting of a set of organisations and agencies interacting among themselves to achieve programme goals. There would, therefore, be numerous decision-points, several participants, and a multiplicity of agencies. Planning, in such a situation, calls for orchestration of activities of a number of organisations.

Lessening load of Governance

The new public administration lays emphasis on taking much of the load of governance off the shoulders of government. The concept of ‘third-party government’ is emerging, which places reliance on private, semi-public, and voluntary organisation for the performance of many of the functions, instead of depending on conventional government departments.

Role of the Civil Service in our Parliamentary democracy

A permanent Civil Service is the sine qua non of a parliamentary democracy. In the midst of change of governments due to periodic elections, the Civil Service provides an

element of stability and continuity without which orderly government would be impossible.

Our Constitution vests the executive power of the Union and the State in the President and the Governor respectively and enjoins that this executive power shall be exercised by them directly or through officers subordinate to them in accordance with the Constitution. These officers belong to our permanent civil service. In effect, it is the Council of Ministers with the Prime Minister or the Chief Minister at their head, who exercise the executive power of the State through officers of the Civil Service.

The relationship between the Ministers and the Civil Servants in a parliamentary democracy such as ours is not amenable to any precise definition. However, some of the broad parameters of the relationship could be summed up as follows: (i) Formulation of policy of the Government is the legitimate task of the Minister. At the stage of formulation of policy, the civil servant is expected to give his free and frank advice but once the Minister, after giving due consideration to advice of the civil servant, gives the policy a final shape, it is the duty of the civil servant to carry out the policy diligently and faithfully though he may be having his own views about the soundness of the policy. (ii) The preservation of integrity, fearlessness and independence of the civil servant is an essential condition of a sound parliamentary system of Government. One of the important functions of the civil service is to 'speak truth to power', as once asserted by a head of the Canadian Public Service. (iii) There must be trust and mutual respect between the Minister and the Civil Servant as without their unity of action in the higher echelons of government will be difficult to achieve. (iv) Both the Minister and the Civil Servant must perform their roles in accordance with the Constitution and the laws as even a minor transgression thereof can ultimately be subversive of good governance and rule of law. 1.17 In our country, the Ministers and the Civil Servants are more than mere major players of government. "They are the custodian of a nation's ideals, of the belief it cherishes, of its permanent hopes, of the faith which makes the nation out of a mere aggregation of individuals". and citizen- friendly; transparent and accountable; and ethical.

There is no formal arrangement by which Departments and Ministries of Government of India validate their programmes from the point of view of the common man or the beneficiary. In our opinion, to make the civil service citizen-friendly, each office/Department/Ministry must identify the points of citizen Interface in their programmes. In other words, services to the common people, which are expected to be delivered by the office/Department/Ministry, need to be identified in consultation with the beneficiaries. The office/Department/Ministry will also have to benchmark the quality of services and the period within which services can be delivered. The grievance redressal mechanism should be strengthened and held accountable so that a common citizen will know the officer he can contact if he has a grievance and the time required to attend to the grievance. Public Office and the Citizen:

A common man's contact with any public office is often not a happy experience. It is rarely that a phone call by an ordinary citizen to a government office gets things done,

unless he has 'contacts' in the office. We recommend that there must be toll-free phones in every government office and names of officers who handle the toll-free phones must be given adequate publicity. The details regarding these officers should be available on the 'website so that the citizen who has access to the internet can find out who he should contact in a public office for redressal of his grievance. Nonnally, one telephone call to a designated officer in any office should be sufficient to elicit the required information. If information is not readily available, the officer should call back the citizen as soon as it is available. Appointments to the common man to meet officials should be given over phone or as soon as he presents himself at the reception desk of the office. A government official cannot give the excuse that he does not deal with the subject on which information is sought.

The designated 17 officer who receives the phone call in an office should be responsible for addressing the issue raised by the common man and no one should be required to contact a number of officers before he gets information or relief sought for. As mentioned earlier, each office/Department/Ministry must have adequate toll free telephone numbers with voice mail system so that a citizen can leave his message in the voice mail and get an answer from an official within a reasonable time.

We recommend that junior officers at the cutting edge level of administration be given training in custom er service, attending to phone calls and resolving public grievances. Performance of these officers should be judged on the basis of their competence in public dealings. W e recommend that from time-to-time senior officers should check the efficacy of the Information and Facilitation Centres, the response time in toll-free numbers of an office and the overall efficiency of citizen-centric services. We suggest that at periodic intervals, senior officers may ring up the toll-free number o f their own office to find out how quickly the official in charge responds to the need of the common man. Empowerment of Citizens:

In our country, public authorities still do not associate citizens or citizen's groups such as non-government organizations, consumer groups and the media with formulation or evaluation of government's policies and programmes. It is necessary that Departments/Ministries direct offices under them, who are service providers, to build partnerships with local groups and organizations representing the citizens not only for formulating the programmes but also for their proper implementation. Freedom of information Act:

The basic objective of the Freedom of Information Act 2002 is to enable every citizen to have access to information under control of public authorities to promote openness, transparency and accountability in administration. This has sometimes been described as the Dracula principle: "throw light on problems and they tend to wither away." The Freedom of Information Act, even though enacted two years ago. has not yet been implemented. W e recommend that rules under the Act be finalized and the date of implementation of the Act notified without further delay. This is an area where application of e-governance principles can achieve simplified processes and greater citizen access to information. While formulating rules under the Act, there should be

provision for putting in such information systems right at the beginning. We recommend that the efficacy of the Freedom of Information Act 2002 to enable the common people to get the requisite information from government offices be reviewed by a task force after about three to four years of commencement of the Act. The Task Force must have as members eminent public men, functionaries of non-governmental organizations and media persons. The Official Secrets Act:

In the past, several Committees have recommended that the Official Secrets Act should be reviewed to include only the essential minimum requirements of national security, public order and individual privacy. We recommend that this be implemented at the earliest.

Other than the items included in a negative list, information on all other items in the government should be placed in the public domain and the burden of proving whether any information not disclosed relates to the negative list should be on the government. Name Badges:

One of the methods by which public accountability of civil servants can be ensured is by identifying the official by name so that the citizen with a grievance can file a complaint in case of injustice meted out to him. We recommend that all officers having public dealing should wear name badges while on duty. This is already being done by the police, the para-military forces and the armed forces of the country.

Government functionaries take most of the decisions collectively. The duties, functions and responsibilities of most of them are neither set out in precise terms nor widely publicized for information of the general public. Consequently, it is difficult to pinpoint non-performance on the part of these functionaries and hold any one of them accountable. Detailed job description of every post in civil service along with the annual performance targets should, therefore, be prepared at the beginning of every financial year so that the performance of each incumbent of the post can be judged against the objectives. The job description, names and phone numbers of incumbents should be made available on the website. We are of the view that if performance of an officer in civil service is given importance, there would be a new work culture with a drive for excellence.

After his appointment, Secretary of a Ministry/Department should be asked to formulate annual performance targets as per Action Plans. If annual targets have been already formulated by his predecessor in office, he will adopt the targets with modifications, if any, after discussion with the Minister in charge. We recommend that to achieve the annual targets, Secretaries to Government should be given full freedom - including delegated financial powers - so that they can be held strictly accountable for performance as per the targets. Sensitizing Civil Servants to Citizens'

Immediately after retirement, civil servants are often surprised at the behaviour of those in service. It is rather strange that the retired officers realize the lack of responsiveness of government agencies only when they have to approach the government agencies as

common citizens. We feel that to give the civil servant an idea of how a common man transacts business with government, it would be useful for each civil servant to be made familiar with problems being faced by the common man in relation to government departments. We recommend that every five to seven years in service, at least one month/two months should be spent by a civil servant with a nongovernmental organization, academic institution or in the private sector. It would be worthwhile for the government to identify such institutions to which civil servants can be attached.

At present no common man would voluntarily go to any government office because of the hassles likely to be faced by him. To eliminate such hassles, a system of ISO 9000 should be introduced for government offices and a date specified by which all government offices are made ISO compliant. This is necessary to provide the essential minimum services and convenience in each public office.

We are informed that the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has already established procedures and systems for this purpose and can provide the necessary support for training and auditing through its national network.

Attention was drawn to the high turnover of senior officers in crucial posts leading to the erosion of institutional memory. Often there is a discontinuity in the administration with each officer having to establish new systems without regard to the past practices. Valuable experience and knowledge are lost with the departing officer which could have been useful for his successor. Though there are instructions that each officer should leave behind a handing over note to his successor, in practice, the system of a 'Note to Successor' has been virtually discontinued.

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