"Not more laws, but technology is the key"

Yogesh Kulkarni

College of Engineering Pune, India

> *"If people are good only because they fear punishment,*
> *and hope for reward, then we are a sorry lot indeed."*
> *– Albert Einstein*

It is easier to make laws than to provide ~~a~~ good governance. That's why there are more of them, the complicated ones, and with ~~designed~~ loop-holes. It is like a highly-elaborate house-plan. But not many ensure that the house gets built properly. The builder (the enforcement agency) is simply interested in the income without bothering about the quality. Thus the house turns to shambles irrespective of all the checks-and-balances provided in the design-plan.

Out of many possible reasons why good governance is not a reality, ~~here~~ are ~~some~~:

- Too many laws force the common man~~,~~ to take a easier route. You need hundreds ~~to~~ permissions to start a business. The enforcement agency, having powers and knowledge of the loop-holes, bends only after a commission. **Simplification** of procedures is the key to address this problem.
- Different laws at different places and for different situations adds to the confusion. Taxation, for example, varies from place to place, making the system so opaque that you need Chartered Accountants to tackle them. **Uniformity** is the key to address this problem.
- Hiding information gives power and breeds corruption. Let the common man be the judge. **Easy access to information** is the key to address this problem.

Simplification

Laws ~~could~~ be simplified, and technology ~~could~~ be used to decimate ~~them~~. Technology can also be used to plug loop-holes by exposing the decisions taken. Following are some possibilities.

- **Black Money**: Unaccounted-untraceable money, mostly in the form of Cash. Solution ~~would be~~ to discourage the use of cash, or even better ~~would be~~ to invalidate it. Cancel all the currency notes above 100/-. Technological solution here ~~would be~~ to replace paper notes by plastic ones. They will last longer and wont be easy to counterfeit. It won't be worth for our "neighbors" to print 100/- plastic notes. Use of credit-debit cards~~,~~ mobile transaction have not reached masses yet. Ease of user-interface, use of regional language on websites and apps will address this problem.

- **Tax Evasion**: Very few people pay taxes, not because they don't want to (in most cases) but because it is easy to evade them. Solution is to levy indirect-tax on transactions ~~only~~. So, a technology platform which overlooks all the transactions, like GST (Goods and Services Tax), bank transactions etc, can deduct some percentage at each stage.

Uniformity

Being ~~one~~ nation, we need to have uniformity across all states, for various functions, but thats not the case.

- **Single ID**: Forgoing all the rest like PAN, Sr Citizen, License etc, *Aadhar* card should be the only ID. Against this, lots of technological applications can be built. Similar to SSN (Social Security Number) in the USA, all records, transactions etc of an individual can be linked to this ID. With easy access to the relevant information, we wont need to provide myriad of paper-work. Say, if students' records are available, an employer can easily access them without need of notarized certificates etc.

- **Single Education Board**: Single curriculum having enough flexibility for local customization. Subjects like Maths, Science can be standard across the country, including religious schools. Examinations for common subjects can be held nation/state-wide, same time, using e-platform. This will ensure portability and common benchmarking as seen in exams like CAT or IIT-JEE.

Easy access to information

RTI (Right to Information) is a perfect example of empowering the common man to be vigilant, by having easy access to information. But it is still not used by common man, on regular basis. We need to give ready access to government databases using technology solutions. Let all that information be open for access through website, mobile applications and via voice service like *Sarathi* this way citizens ~~would~~ be able to keep a watch on the governance. Some potential applications can be:

- **Illegal schools**: Each school should display its registration number. ~~With~~ this, one should be able to access all the information available from government database, like legal documents, teachers, facilities, RTE admissions, fees, location, pictures etc. If one finds discrepancy, s/he can complain easily. This way, one does have to depend solely on the external inspectors, as parents too can keep a watch on illegality.

- **Illegal Hoardings**: Mushrooming of hoardings all over the city not only harms the beauty but also causes revenue loss in case of illegal ones. Each hoarding should display its registration number. With this, one should be able to access all the information available from government database, like legal documents, fees paid, size, content, period etc. If one finds discrepancy, s/he can complain easily.

These are basically applications which access information via displayed-ID. There is enormous potential for such applications apart from the ones mentioned above. Other than classified-defense-related information, all the rest can be exposed via easy apps.

Technology is ready; only waiting for the political will and/or a push ~~by~~ the citizens.