Administrative Reforms for Transparent Administration

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ABSTRACT: The administration has a vital bearing on a country and its people. In ancient India right from Vedic Days, it has been the avowed objective of administration to be responsive, transparent, accountable and citizen-friendly. These factors could be regarded as the touchstone of any administrative setup. Transparency and accountability in administration are sine qua non of participatory democracy. Government secrecy fosters disbelief of government on the part of the citizens and transparency eliminates the wall of secrecy built against the common people by those holding power. Accountability goes beyond the mere responsibility of the delivery of a task or service. In order to transform India into our cherished dream of AatmaNirbhar Bharat, we need to work with the guiding principle of 'minimum government, maximum governance'. And it is with this keystone in mind, the government's administrative reforms have been aimed at encouraging greater efficiency, transparency, corruption-free governance, accountability, and reduction in scope for discretion.

KEYWORDS: administrative, transparency, reforms, government, corruption-free, public, citizens, democracy

I.INTRODUCTION

Transparency in Public Administration – Background

The administration of Kautilya during the Mouryan period was more or less centralized with an effective system of intelligence gathering.During the Mughal period, the concept of centralised administration continued with greater vigour. Accountability and transparency in this centralised administration were conspicuous by their absence.Then came the colonial administration of the British. Here again, the basic format was of a centralized administration. There was a vertically controlled administrative setup with a District Magistrate and Collector as the key figure. The Collector in the eyes of the people was "MaiBap" whose job was to maintain law and order and collect revenue.While the administration was efficient, it had hardly any room for being responsive, accountable and transparent. It was not responsive and not citizen-friendly.These concepts, however, underwent a sea change in later years with token participation of people at various levels.Many administrative innovations were no doubt brought about in various fields like social, economic and technological, but these were mere cosmetic changes and primarily intended to suit the colonial requirements.

Need of Transparency in Public Administration

Transparency is required to make the system of public service delivery effective. However, sheer knowledge of what entitlements are, and who is responsible for fulfilling them, is not sufficient to ensure that public services are passably and effectively delivered to the 'intended' recipients.The primary concern of the citizens in a good civil society is that their government must be fair and good. For a Government to be good it is essential that its systems and sub-systems of Governance are efficient, economic, ethical and equitable.In addition, the governing process must also be just, reasonable, fair and citizen-friendly. For these and other qualities and good governance, the administrative system must also be accountable and responsive, besides promoting transparency and people's participation.Transparency makes sure that people know exactly what is going on and what is the rationale of the decisions taken by the Government or its functionaries at different levels. Accountability makes sure that for every action and inaction in government and its consequences there is a civil servant responsible and accountable to the government, the society and the people.

Significance of Transparency in Public Administration

Transparency is broadly accepted as a major principle of good governance. Good governance implies accountability to the citizens of a democratic polity and their involvement in decision making, implementation and evaluation of projects, programs and public policies. The test of good governance lies in the goals and objectives of the government, in its policies and programs, in the manner of their execution, in the result achieved, and above all in the general perception of the people about the quality of functioning of various agencies, their attitude and behavior towards the people, their sincerity, honesty and their commitment towards the public duties. In this perspective, transparency and accountability become invaluable components of good governance as well as of good administration.Transparency allows stakeholders to collect information that may be critical to uncovering abuses and defending their interests. Likewise, transparency increases the accountability of Government officials.Transparency means that the criteria, process and systems of decision-making are openly known to all in a public manner. Citizens charter becomes an important measure for transparency in institutional setup.The declaration of Right To Information Act set the stage for transparency in the functioning of the government and its various agencies. Under this Act, access to information from a public agency has become a statutory right of every citizen.

Major Initiative to Enhance Transparency in Public Administration in India

Some of the initiatives taken by the Indian Public Administration to ensure transparency in its working include – Right to Information Act, Public Services Bill, Citizens Charters, e-Governance, e-Bhoomi, e-Choupal, e-procurement.Right to Information Act – It is the freedom to know the details of the steps and measures taken by the different elements of the system. It can be better called the right of public access to the key information. It induces deep trust in the actions of the system. Whenever the public finds the decisions are forced or manipulated, they can seek the details of the matter. Go through the details of the Right to Information on the link provided here.Citizens Charters- Citizens Charter Bill 2011 aims at providing rights to citizens for time-bound delivery of goods and services and provide a Grievance Redressal Mechanism. Citizen Charter is a voluntary and written document that spells out the service provider's efforts taken to focus on their commitment towards fulfilling the needs of the citizens/customers. Check out the detailed information on Citizen's Charter on the link provided here. Such a bill was previously recommended by the Second Administrative Reforms Commission. Also, dive deep into the information about the Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC).Elimination of Corruption – Lokpal and Lokayuktas aims at reducing corruption by setting up a separate institution of Lokpal at the Central level and Lokayuktas at the State level. These organizations investigate cases of corruption against public servants in the respective Government organizations.

Hindrances in Transparency in Public Administration

The governance involving transparency and accountability suffers from the weakness that disclosed Information's genuineness can also be a dubious and wrong interpretation of available information can give detrimental results to an organization. Further, the abundance and availability of information mean that the user needs the skill to determine what it is that they want. The user of information has a major role to play in affecting information sharing.Change in the mindset of the government employees is necessary as it becomes a great hindrance in the process of ensuring transparency and accountability in governance structures in India.Limited digitalization of government offices and inadequate infrastructure has further been a stumbling block in ensuring effective transparency and accountability measures.

Way Forward with Transparency in Public Administration

There is an imperative need to strengthen and widen the national public information infrastructure through developing information networks for wider access of digital information through wider use of information technologies.Changing the mindset of the government employees is important. This will be addressed to organizing programs for orientation, training, and capacity building.States may be advised to establish an independent public grievance redressal authority to deal with complaints of delay, harassment, and corruption.

II. DISCUSSION

As we set to celebrate 75 years of India's Independence with promises of a New India at heart, let us also look back at some of the administrative reforms which have not only become the testament of our strength in the last few years but also gave us the mantra of 'sabka saath, sabka vikas':

- Launch of "Mission Karmayogi"- From rules-based to roles-based, the National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building (NPCSCB) was launched as a new national architecture for civil services. It is a comprehensive reform of the capacity-building apparatus at the individual, institutional and process levels for efficient public service delivery.
- e-Samiksha- A real-time online system for monitoring and following up on the decisions taken by the Government at the Apex level in respect of the implementation of important Government programmes/projects.
- e-Office- Strengthening of e-Office Mission Mode Project (MMP) for enabling Ministries/ Departments to switch over to paperless offices and efficient decision making.
- Self-certification of documents for appointments- From June 2014, recruiting agencies can issue provisional appointment letters based on the submission of self-certified documents by the candidates.
- Discontinuation of the interview in the recruitment of junior-level posts- From January 2014, interviews were discontinued for recruitment to all Group 'C', Group 'B' (Non-Gazetted posts), and other equivalent posts in all Government of India Ministries/ Departments/ Attached Offices/ Subordinate Offices/ Autonomous Bodies/ Public Sector Undertakings to curb malpractices and to bring objectivity to the selection process.
- Appointment at senior positions- Multi-source feedback for empanelment for the posts of Joint Secretary and above was introduced.
- Citizen Charters- The government has mandated Citizen Charters for all Ministries/Departments which are updated and reviewed on a regular basis. The Citizen Charters of Central Government Departments are available at the respective websites of Ministries/Departments. To know more about Citizen Charter, Click Here.
- Weeding out inefficient officers: Intensive review of Officers with doubtful integrity by premature retirement.
- Integrated Government Online Training Programme: Use for online module-based training.
- Good Governance Index: It was launched to assess the Status of Governance and the impact of various interventions taken up by the States/UTs The objectives of GGI are to provide quantifiable data to compare the state of governance in all States and UTs, enable them to formulate & implement suitable strategies for improved governance and shift to result-oriented approaches and administration.
- 'Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration': Comprehensive restructuring of the Scheme for Awards .
- Promote e-Governance: To boost e-Governance in a holistic manner, various policy initiatives and projects have been undertaken to develop core and support infrastructure.
- National Conference on e-Governance: It provides a platform for government to engage with experts, intellectuals from industry, and academic institutions to exchange experiences relating to e-Governance initiatives.
- National e-Governance Service Delivery Assessment: It aims at assessing the States, UTs, and Central Ministries on the efficiency of e-Governance service delivery. To take part in the Survey, Click Here.
- Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS): The Government undertakes CPGRAMS reforms in the top grievance receiving Ministries/ Departments by enabling questionnaire-guided registration process and providing automatic forwarding of grievances to field level functionaries to reduce redress time.
- Increasing efficiency in decision making in Central Secretariat: By reducing the channel of submission to 4, adoption of e-Office version 7.0, digitization of central registration units, a greater delegation of virtual private networks under the Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure 2014, and adoption of desk officer system, the government is increasing efficiency in decision making in Central Secretariat.

Recently, the Union Government gave the information on Major Administrative Reforms which were introduced in recent years and emphasised the importance of these reforms in making governance more accessible.These reforms aim to encourage greater efficiency, transparent and corruption free governance, accountability and reduce scope for discretion. The Government follows the maxim "Minimum Government - Maximum Governance".

- ▪ MissionKarmayogi:

This is a National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building (NPCSCB). It is a comprehensive reform of the capacity building apparatus at individual, institutional and process levels for efficient public service delivery.It is aimed at building a future-ready civil service with the right attitude, skills and knowledge, aligned to the vision of New India.The capacity building will be delivered through iGOT-Karmayogi digital platform, with content drawn from global best practices.

Lateral Entry:Lateral entry means when personnel from the private sector are selected to an administrative post of the government despite them not being selected in or being part of a bureaucratic setup.This is significant because contemporary times require highly skilled and motivated individuals at the helm of administrative affairs, without which public service delivery mechanisms do not work smoothly.Lateral Entry helps in bringing the values of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in the Government sector. It will help in building a culture of performance within the Government sector.

e-Samiksha:A real time online system for monitoring and follow up action on the decisions taken by the Government at the Apex level in respect of implementation of important Government programmes/projects.It is a digital monitor for bureaucracy to rein in slackers.Also, the government has been taking an intensive review for weeding out inefficient and Officers of doubtful integrity by premature retirement.

e-Office:e-Office Mission Mode Project (MMP) has been strengthened for enabling Ministries/Departments to switch over to paperless office and efficient decision making.

Citizen Charters:Government has mandated Citizen Charters for all Ministries/Departments which are updated and reviewed on a regular basis.It is a written document that spells out the service provider's efforts taken to focus on their commitment towards fulfilling the needs of the citizens/customers.

III. RESULTS

Good Governance Index

It assesses the Status of Governance and impact of various interventions taken up by the State Government and Union Territories (UTs).The objectives of GGI are to provide quantifiable data to compare the state of governance in all States and UTs, enable States and UTs to formulate and implement suitable strategies for improving governance and shift to result oriented approaches and administration.It has been launched by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions.

National Conference on e-Governance:

It provides a platform for the government to engage with experts, intellectuals from industry and academic institutions to exchange experiences relating to e-Governance initiatives.A conference on e-Governance was organised by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) along with the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) in Mumbai.

Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS):It is an online web-enabled system developed by National Informatics Centre (Ministry of Electronics & IT [MeitY]), in association with Directorate of Public Grievances (DPG) and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG).The CPGRAMS provides the facility to lodge a grievance online from any geographical location. It enables the citizen to track online the grievance being followed up with Departments concerned and also enables DARPG to monitor the grievance.National e-Governance Service Delivery Assessment: It aims at assessing the States, UTs and Central Ministries on the efficiency of e-Governance service delivery.Comprehensive restructuring of the Scheme for 'Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration' .

Administrative Reforms Commission

The ARC is set up by the Government of India to review the public administration system and give recommendations to improve it.The first ARC (1966) was headed by Morarji Desai initially and later by K. Hanumanthaiah. The second ARC constituted in 2005 was chaired by Veerappa Moily.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Reforms are an obvious response to the new challenges confronting the state institution managing public affairs; what lies at the root of such an exercise is the effort to enhance administrative capability in the changed scenario.Since the civil servants are accountable to political executives and that results in politicisation of civil services, the focus must be on external accountability mechanisms like citizen charters, social audits and encouraging outcome orientation among civil servants.Civil servants should provide unbiased, rational and meritorious suggestions to the political executive in policy formulation. It requires an impartial Civil Services Board that can look after all the aspects related to promotions, transfers, posting and suspensions.

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