

## VISION AND PATHWAYS FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

The euphoria and hope generated by the change of Government in India in May 2014 when Narendra Modi became the Prime Minister of India has already started to dissipate. It is not that the new Government has reneged on its promise of good governance in India, but the measures it has initiated hold little promise. People feel unconvinced. The slew of schemes and programmes of the NDA Government like Digital India, Skilled India, Swachh Bharat, Smart City et al seem flawed in their concept and implementation techniques.

India takes pride in being the largest democracy. More than 65% of its population is below 35 years of age. Such a huge number of working population can be an asset for any country. But the worrying part is that just 3.5% of its workforce is skilled. Countries like South Korea which within a span of fifty years catapulted the GNI per capita from \$100 to more than \$20,000 have 96% skilled workforce. India should not fritter away its demographic dividend. Various Government efforts have failed to provide a wholesome life to the people. As a consequence India's performance on all socio-economic indices remains dismal. Twenty two percent of the people are still below poverty line. There is still significant spatial poverty. It has a social dimension also. There are numerous Government schemes for inclusive growth but vote bank politics and absence of strong campaign finance law upset the apple cart of Government subsidies. The present Government intends to build hundred smart cities but the existing cities are hardly livable with dangerously poor air quality. Heaps of garbage and squalor take a toll on the health of the citizens. The poor and the vulnerable are deprived of public goods due to

rampant corruption. Six hundred million people still defecate in the open and three hundred million are still without electricity. The standard of primary education is abysmally low. More than fifty percent of Class V students cannot read the Class II textbooks. This weak foundation adversely affects the higher level of education. Majority of engineering graduates are unemployable. It is high time the Government rethinks its policies and reconsiders its priorities.

The purpose of the paper is to provide inputs to the Government on how to go about its varied promises. The paper outlines a clear vision for the country and suggests multiple pathways to usher in good governance in the country. It is inspired and informed by the human development approach and the conceptual framework of the empowerment line. It is organized in four sections. Section I discusses the vision India should chase, Section II dwells upon the human development approach and explains the empowerment line with reference to India. Section III presents an overview of the important schemes of the government and discusses the faultlines in policies and their implementation. Section IV recommends the pathways to hasten the process of bridging the empowerment gap and making India a high middle income country with policies of sustainable development firmly in place.

**Keywords: Good Governance, Vision of India, Pathways for Good Governance, Empowerment Line**

Governance is the main marker of the status of a country. Generally most of the third world is bogged down by mal governance and struggling to find out ways to enhance the quality of its governance. India too is a part of this saga. The leaders sometimes seem befuddled on how to move ahead in this herculean endeavour.

In social science governance as a concept is studied in an abstract sense mostly at a meso and macro level. Individual agents don't count much in such studies. But when we observe the oscillations in the governance level of countries we find that besides the organizational settings

and institutions, the ability of the leader also impacts the governance of the country. Leaders like Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, Park Chung Hee of South Korea galvanised the people towards a vision. Their leadership skills translating into policies and efficient implementation began to fructify in the form of palpable good governance. These were however authoritarian leaders. In democracies, the number and role of veto players is much more, therefore providing good governance is more formidable.

When the NDA (National Democratic Alliance) government assumed power in India in May 2014 and Narendra Modi became the Prime minister, hope and optimism surged regarding improvement in governance. The main plank on which he won the elections was good governance. The government launched a number of schemes and made policies and plans towards realizing this goal. This paper sheds light on the important initiatives of the government. It points out the important lacuna inherent in government endeavours and offers recommendations. The paper also offers a vision for the country and believes that the vision should be predicated on and shaped by the dreams as well as reality, problems as well as the potential of the country.

## **Vision for India**

India is plagued by endless problems like poverty, hunger, unemployment, corruption, capacity constraints in service sectors like education, health, etc. to name a few. The World Bank has classified economies according to gross national income (GNI) per capita. India's GNI per capita is \$ 1570. It is a low middle income country (MIC). The World Bank has provided a list which also includes non-sovereign entities or other special groupings. It is a list of countries by Gross National Income per capita in 2014 at nominal values, according to the Atlas Method, an indicator of income developed by the World Bank. According to it the number of economies in each group is as follows:

- Low income - 35 Countries
- Lower middle income - 56 Countries
- Upper middle income - 54 Countries

- High income: non OECD - 39 Countries
- High income: OECD - 31

The **GNI per capita** is the dollar value of a country's final income in a year, divided by its population. It reflects the average income of a country's citizens. It gives us a sense of the quality of life of people and economic condition of the country. Generally people living in countries with higher GNI per capita have longer life expectancies, higher literacy rates, lower poverty incidences, access to safe drinking water, lower maternal and infant mortality rates and better wellbeing e.g., in US which is a high income country with GNI per capita \$ 55,200, sixty percent of officially poor have a car, forty percent have an AC in their house. Researches indicate that generally a country takes twenty eight years to move from low income to low MIC and then fourteen years to hop to the next level of high MIC. But some are caught in the middle income trap and take much longer.

In India 140 million people were lifted above poverty line between 2005 and 2012. Three quarters were lifted up due to economic growth and one quarter due to government subsidies and increased government spending on basic services (MGI Report, 2014). Keeping the prevalent scenario in mind, the vision of India should be to become a high middle income country by 2023. High MIC means more than \$4086 GNI per capita. This exalted stage will itself take care of many extant woes of the populace. India aspires to be a permanent member of the Security Council. But the existing Permanent five members are far ahead in terms of GNI per capita as the table below will make clear. India therefore, should first put its house in order, focus on augmenting the income level of the people and then expend its energy in trying for the Security Council seat.

**Table 1**

Countries	GNI per capita (2014)
US	\$55,200
UK	\$42,690
Russian Federation	\$13,210
France	\$43,070
China	\$7,380
Greece	\$22,090
India	\$1,570
Singapore	\$55,150
Korea Republic	\$22,090

The Table also shows the GNI per capita of Singapore which was once a fishing village and a colonial outpost but changed into an economic powerhouse under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew. It got rich by hard work and trading on its location and skills. It is an island state virtually devoid of natural resources; it even imports its water from Malaysia. “The sustainable path to riches has been to ‘create value’ through trade.” (Timmer 2006) Its focus on education and skill development also paid off. Today it has exceptional ability to stay at the cutting edge of fast-changing industries such as robotics, aerospace, and biotech. Similarly in 1960 South Korea, devastated after a long war with North Korea was one of the poorest countries in the world, with a per capita income of about one-hundred US dollars, but within a span of 50 years it achieved a per capita income of twenty thousand US dollars (Singh 2013). Korea has seen great successes in industrial policy. It established effective institutions at the same time as economic liberalization. (Cheng et al.1998) The GNI per capita of even Greece which is the worst performer in Europe is much higher than India. The people there experience better life. It is therefore in India’s best interest to focus on economic growth and raise the productivity of its 1.2 billion people. The

vision should be the holistic development of the people with emphasis on sustainable development. The Government should not just be inspired by the human capital theory but also the human development theory.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The Human Capital theory (Shultz 1961,) avers that developing nations can enhance their national incomes by investing in human capital in terms of education and health. According to this theory education and training raise the productivity of workers by imparting useful knowledge and skills hence raising workers' future income by increasing their lifetime earnings (Becker, 1994). The human development paradigm (Sen, 2003 Haq, 2003) is much broader. According to it human development is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests. Rather than simply growing people's wealth, human development proponents argue the goal of development programs and projects should be to "enlarge people's choices" (Haq,2003) by addressing the lack of education, poor health care, inequalities in economic, social and political rights, and other factors that hinder human progress (Sen, 2003).

In India, 22 percent of the population, or some 270 million people are below the official poverty line and about 680 million people are in a vulnerable stage who can re-enter into extreme poverty if appropriate policies are not made and implemented. There is always this looming fear that in the absence of appropriate policies and plans India can fall into the middle income trap.

The McKinsey Global Institute (MGI, 2014) has created a new analytical framework called the Empowerment Line (EL). It is relevant in Indian context and can be factored in the formulation of policies. The EL has dealt with the question of the level of consumption required for an individual to meet the necessities of human development. (MGI, 2014) The cost of fulfilling eight basic needs (food, energy, housing, drinking water, sanitation, health care, education, and social security) at a level sufficient to achieve a decent, if modest, standard of living rather than just bare subsistence was estimated for this. When this metric was applied for 2011–12, it was found that 56 percent of India's population lacks the means to meet their essential needs. By this

measure, some 680 million Indians are deprived, more than 2.5 times the population of 270 million below the official poverty line. (ibid)

The government should launch a virtuous cycle of job creation and productivity growth that raises incomes and generates resources for public spending; it should also make the delivery of basic services more effective. This has the potential to leave 100 million people (7 percent of the population) below the Empowerment Line in 2022, and just 17 million (1 percent of the population) below the official poverty line. (ibid)

### **Initiatives taken by the Modi Government**

The Modi Government has launched various schemes to improve the governance of the country. An assessment of the initiatives taken by the government indicates that more homework and realistic approach is required to attain success. Some of the important schemes are- Skill India, Digital India, Swachh Bharat, Smart City, Make in India et al.

Skill India is important no doubt because just 3.5% of the workforce is skilled in India compared to 46% in China, 74% in Germany, and 96% in South Korea. (Economic Times, 15 July 2015). But Skill India also cannot work unless state of education is improved. Mere enrollment with no attention to the quality of education is not helping anyone.

NGO Pratham on 13 January 2015 released the 10th Annual Status of Education Report (ASER 2014). The report shows that half of Class V children cannot read the text of Class II, half of them cannot do subtractions of two digits. Similarly in higher education, Indian universities contribute a measly 3.5% of global research output; China is responsible for 17%. (Burman 2015). Majority of engineering students in India are unemployable.

Make in India remains hostage to excess capacity in consumer goods and continuing hurdles to doing business. Infrastructure remains the one sector that can absorb huge amounts of capital. That remains stymied because infrastructure companies struggle under crushing debt and their lenders, under loans turning bad. Resolving this is the key to invigorate the economy and retain

confidence in the market. (ET, 25 August, 2015). Even Indian companies are shifting their headquarters to foreign countries like Flipkart and Grofers have shifted it to Singapore, primarily due to friendlier corporate regime there. The corporate tax rate in India is 30%, in Singapore it is 17%. (TOI, 3Oct.2015)

Again, to actualize the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign) more than 4.25 lakh toilets were built in 2.62 lakh schools in 2014-15 but many of the government toilets are already defunct. In the absence of proper sewage lines and arrangements for their treatment, mere construction of toilets won't solve the problem.

Digital India can't work when 25% of people are still deprived of access to electricity. Much of rural India still makes do with patchy availability of power. The culture of political patronage of power theft and giveaways, results in 30% of all power produced not being paid for and state electricity boards being too broke to purchase power from plants standing by to generate. Without fixing this there can be no Make in India or Digital India. (ET 29 Sept. 2015). India boasts it has added many thousands of megawatts to the grid. Yet around 40% of mostly private power plants built in the last ten years lie rusting. (Burman 2015). Similarly large swathes of spectrum remain unassigned, underutilized and broken up into discrete segments that prevent commercial use calling for contiguous bands being made available to operators. The scarcity and cost of spectrum that inhibit Digital India are derived from policy. (ET 29 Sept.2015) As regards the Smart City, the blueprint is still not clear. There is ambivalence among officials whether new cities would be made or the existing ones would be transformed.

Simply announcing schemes and allocating funds for them will not improve the situation. The sequencing of priorities seems wrong, homework has not been done in some cases and core problems are not getting enough attention. For long term and sustainable development the Government will have to create an ecosystem for good governance.



## **Pathways to Good Governance**

For good governance the government should focus on making the fundamentals of the system strong. This requires placing top priority on the growth of strong institutions. Once the imperative of robust institutions is apperceived by those in power, the pathways to good governance can be easily demarcated and followed leading to the overall development of the country.

## **Importance of Institutions**

Institutions according to the widely accepted definition (North 1990, 3–5) are the rules of the game in society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction. In consequence they structure incentives in human exchange, whether political, social, or economic. Institutions both constrain and enable behavior. The existence of rules implies constraints. However, such a constraint can open up possibilities: it may enable choices and actions that otherwise would not exist. (Hodgson, 2006) Rules include norms of behavior and social conventions as well as legal rules. Legal rules are enforced by the courts while informal norms are enforced usually by the peers or others who impose cost on those who do not live up to them.

Individual agents act within the organizational rule-system. Alesina (1998) demonstrates that institutional quality, as measured by bureaucratic efficiency, absence of corruption, protection of property rights, and the rule of law, is important for growth. Institutions are enduring entities that do not change easily at the will of the agents (Rothstein 1996), which implies among other things that the expected life of institutions (constraints) is much higher than the expected life of policies (Tsebelis1990: 98).

Once robust institutions are firmly entrenched, the system easily moves towards growth trajectory. Countries like Finland, Denmark, Australia Sweden that are top rankers in socio-economic indices have well established robust institutions like the Ombudsman, Independent Judiciary, Election Commission, Department of Performance Evaluation etc. But the problem with many developing countries like India is that their institutions are isomorphic mimicry. For

instance, the public schools in India have the camouflage of looking like a school. They have building, teachers, and kids in uniform but there is hardly any education. According to Prichett, (2013) the dangers of isomorphic mimicry are as follows:

- Stagnation in capability for innovation by line ministries as they remain in “compliance” mode with “more of the same”
- “Best Practice” transplants from other places without stipulating relevance
- Cost escalation as “new” and “novel” programs are added without winnowing

Therefore robust institutions organically developed or contextually relevant should be put in place, pathways can then be easily charted out and followed. The pathways can be as follows:

### **Quality Education and Skill Development**

Education remains one of the most powerful instruments for improving lives, reducing poverty and ultimately laying the foundation for economic growth. In India the quality of education at all levels is poor. The ASER report and the global ratings make that amply clear. There is immediate need to revamp the system of education.

At the primary level, focus should be on the three R's i.e., reading, writing and arithmetic. Teacher attendance and students' learning outcomes can be monitored very well with the help of technology. With the technology based child tracking system, child enrollment and progression should be strictly observed. Instead of rote learning the application part of knowledge should be given importance by taking the child to the fields, construction sites, railway stations, grocery stores, gardens, zoos, jungles and libraries and showing him the importance and utility of tools, maps, natural objects, sanitation, clean drinking water and environment. It will make education interesting and useful for him. He should be taught to critically engage with knowledge and develop a scientific temper. Besides cognitive skills, communication, social skills and problem solving skills should be taught from the beginning. From high school, psychomotor skills which are required in an occupation or business like operating a lathe or a weaving loom, preparing architectural plans, installing equipment should be taught. (W.B Report, Stepping Up Skills,

2010) The affective skills like timeliness, accuracy, and general commitment to quality and performance, and perception of the meaning and value of work will improve his attitude towards work. (ibid) As countries become richer and move up the value-added chain, the skills demanded will change. Institutions of higher education should give up silo mentality and there should be free exchange of knowledge between various research departments.

South Korea spends a larger share of GDP on tertiary education than any rich country other than America. Singapore has some of the top secondary schools in the world, and the government has recently targeted teaching design to imbue every profession such as engineering with some element of creativity (Yueh 2013).

## **Health and Sanitation**

Researches clearly show that ill-health is a major driver into poverty. (ICP Report, 2011) A whopping 63 million people are faced with poverty every year due to "catastrophic" expenditure over healthcare which neutralises the gains of rising income and various government schemes aimed to reduce poverty, according to the health ministry. TOI (4 Jan 2015).

Malnutrition also affects learning in children. The Government needs to establish regulatory mechanisms, setup benchmarks and monitor the cost and quality of care. It needs to define standard treatment guidelines or packages for different types of facilities. (Krishnan 2015) Strengthening of disease surveillance systems linked to action is essential.

According to Dr. Devi Shetty, 1.2 million children die before celebrating their first birthday. Information from the health ministry reveals that the shortage of medical specialists in community health centres where the majority of children in rural India are born is close to 75%. He avers that every year 26 million babies are born in India; at least 5.2 million require caesarean sections. To perform these, the country needs at least 2 lakh gynecologists. India has only 30,000 nearly half of them do not practice obstetrics. The country needs 2 lakh anesthetists for the pregnancies alone and it has just 20,000. Worldwide nurse practitioners or physician assistants provide primary health care. Unfortunately India has never created a legal framework for them to

dispense basic medicines. It also has close to 6 lakh Ayush doctors who are graduates from the same universities that gave medical doctors there MBBS degrees. They just need a six month bridge course to prescribe 47 basic drugs in primary health centres. This could address absenteeism of MBBS doctors and ensure quality health care to rural India. (TOI, 2015)

In fact, improved water and sanitation, reduction in poverty and mal nutrition and a more equitable health system in the form of health insurance are urgently needed.

## **Job Creation**

About 12 million people join the workforce every year in India. But an analysis of job growth over the past nearly two decades by Jayan Jose Thomas of IIT Delhi, using NSSO and Census data, shows that on an average, only 5.5 million new jobs have been added every year in this period. (TOI, July 20, 2015). To provide them gainful employment is an uphill task.

The government should make arrangements for job creation through its policies like thousands of jobs were created in the IT sector. It has also to provide an environment where people can easily start some kind of income generating work themselves. For instance there is dire need of healthy, hygienic and affordable food availability. The government especially the state and local governments can allot several food slots and streets in the cities for restaurants and food stalls. With little innovation convenient food carts with covered storage space for different items can be provided to vendors where clean food can be sold with takeaway facilities. Waste disposal and clean water facilities should be there at such centres. Food streets and food parks of high hygienic standards will not only provide employment to umpteen number of people, but students and office goers can also pick up healthy food and beverages on their way to office and home. Opportunities for jobs will open up for ladies at such places making them highly productive. The above change will also boost tourism manifold as it has done in the South East countries like Thailand and Malaysia leading to further employment opportunities. At present foreign tourists to cities like Agra have meager option; either the food is too expensive or unhygienic. The tourists manage with McDonalds and Pizza Hut. They can't even think of having a delightful, rejuvenating and safe experience. Foraging for good food is an ordeal for them.

Providing job relevant skills, ease of doing business, greater investment in R& D, promoting innovation and a hospitable eco system can change the job scenario in the country.

The challenge of development is to transform growth episodes into sustained growth. Growth can generate virtuous circles of prosperity and opportunity. The challenge for policy is to combine growth-promoting policies with policies that allow the poor to participate fully in the opportunities unleashed and so contribute to that growth. This includes policies to make labour markets work better, remove gender inequalities and increase financial inclusion. (DFID)

New science and technology offers better prospects across both productive and service sectors. They offer not only ‘catch-up’ potential but also ‘leapfrogging’ possibilities. Macroeconomic factors, such as low inflation, export orientation and low labour taxes, help to determine how much employment is created by growth. Structural factors, such as the balance of the economy between agriculture, manufacturing and services, are also important (Ibid).

While the relationship between growth and employment remains robustly positive, the strength of the link has weakened slightly since the turn of the millennium. This has raised concerns about ‘jobless growth’ in some countries. (ibid)

## **Corruption Control and Campaign Finance Reform**

Corruption has seeped to the grassroots level. For routine work also government agents demand bribe which is shared up to the top level. Many corruption theories aver that people in organizations act on the particular dynamics of the organization, these theories see corruption as ‘contagious’ (e.g. Klitgaard 1988; Caiden and Dwivedi 2001; Hulten 2002). These theories state that once an organizational culture (or country) is corrupt, every person who comes in contact with it also runs a big risk of becoming corrupt. These theories sometimes use the metaphor of the ‘slippery slope’ (Punch 2000).

In many Indian organizations, officials are suborned in a corrupt system. For taking the bull by the horn the campaign finance law should be reformed. The present law leads to crony capitalism, rent seeking, quid pro quo and revolving door corrupt practices.

India has developed complex election expenditure, political party funding, and reporting and disclosure laws. These laws may have perverse impacts on the electoral system: they tend to drive campaign expenditure underground and foster a reliance on unaccounted funds or “black money.” This tends to lead to an adverse selection system, in which those willing and able to work with black money dominate politics (Gowda MV and Sridharan E 2012). Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee once testified to a parliamentary committee that “every legislator starts his career with the lie of the false election return he files.”(Datta-Ray, 2008)

For curbing the nexus between politicians and businessmen, parties should rely more on grassroots small-sum donors, which tends to make them more internally democratic and transparent ( Nassmacher K, 2003). Public subsidies, including indirect subsidies like tax deductions and credits, have played an important role in effecting this shift. State funding based on a transparent formula might encourage a shift towards broad based, small-sum, grassroots financing of parties. Public funding should be conditional on parties’ adherence to internal democracy, transparency and accountability.

Once strong institutions like Ombudsman, Central Vigilance Commission, Central Information Commission, Department of Performance Evaluation, and Federal Election Commission are firmly entrenched, corruption will not thrive for long.

## **Smart Cities**

One of the favorite projects of the government is to build 100 smart cities. The concept behind developing the smart cities is to create highly advanced urban regions in terms of overall infrastructure, sustainable real estate, communications and market viability. Essential services to the people living in these cities will be provided through information technology.

Since the cities have developed in an extremely haphazard, sporadic and chaotic manner, it will be a Sisyphean task to convert the entire existing cities into functional cities. The best way is to circumscribe the existing cities within a real or imaginary square or rectangle of two hundred

meter wide roads and develop new cities on a clean slate of empty land with a fresh template. Construction on both sides of the 200 meter wide road should be banned. Only trees should be planted there. A concrete or cement road, wide enough as per the existing need should be built on the allocated road space. After that 100 meter wide roads should be built after every one kilometer in a grid like fashion and every fifth such road should be of 200 meters. When these horizontal and vertical roads will intersect at 90 degree, it will create empty blocks of one square kilometer. Rivers, lakes, forests; small villages should be adjusted on a pragmatic basis. The new cities large or small should be built on these empty blocks of land. (Srivastava S. 2015)

The whole country, wherever possible, starting from plains, should be divided into such grids. If a new city has to be created for a population of 1 million people, 100 blocks of 1 square km each can be used for the purpose. If the area of roads is included, a new big city will require about 130 square kilometers. Of these 100 blocks, 50 can be used for residential purpose. With ingenuity, the space can be utilized in hundreds of wonderful ways.

The blocks will be connected by 100 meter wide roads but every fifth road should be of 200 meters. At present this may sound rather too wide but that can serve a lot of needs and can be a boon for disaster management. Such broad roads can be used for multiple purposes. The 200 meter wide roads which are on all the four sides can have a canal and broad sewer lines. In case of floods, water from other blocks and sub-blocks can be easily drained out. There will be enough space for landing of helicopters, drones and flying cars and for troop movements. City can be fortified easily. (ibid for details)

## **Sustainable Development**

Future growth will also need to be environmentally sustainable. The importance of sustained growth is well realized. For this management of water and other natural resources is required, low carbon technologies should be encouraged. (DFID)

Water governance arrangements should protect ecosystems and preserve or restore the ecological integrity of all natural water bodies and their catchments. The traditional approaches to natural

resource management such as sacred groves and ponds, water harvesting and management systems, etc., should be revived by creating institutional mechanisms which recapture the ecological wisdom and the spirit of community management inherent in those systems.

For a healthy, productive and fulfilling life every individual should have the physical and economic access to a balanced diet, safe drinking water, clean air, sanitation, environmental hygiene, primary health care and education.

Economic development along with environmental sustainability is the need of the hour. Reducing the cost of wind and solar storage technologies with technical progress will be the most crucial step in India's journey towards following a low carbon strategy. (Pathak)

Technology can be leveraged in a number of ways to deliver good governance. Whether it is a simple one like biometric based attendance which has improved office attendance and work culture or a cutting edge one like space technology in mapping and planning.

The well governed countries of North America, Western Europe and Australia also had their phase of trials and tribulations. They took their time, their institutions gradually got firmly rooted, civic sense developed in the people, economic growth catapulted the quality of life, good education, sound health and democracy changed their world view, consensus on fundamental principles crystallized and these countries finally arrived. India has enough to be sanguine about and will hopefully emerge from this phase of churning and be the lodestar of the present century.

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