

Politics as A Process of Governance Particularly In The Context of Urban Local Self Government

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Abstract- *The contemporary politico – administrative parlance significantly include terms like governance good governance , citizen- administration interface through various institutional mechanisms and many other newer areas of administrative activity. These become all the more important in so far as urban governance is concerned. The present article discusses conceptual analysis of the terms included like politics, governance ,good governance ,and patterns and politics in urban governance Politics as a process of governance exists at all levels of government – central , state, and local .The fast emerging urbanized world today needs more effective and efficient administration to deal with many problems of urban governance .the heavy influx of people towards cities is a challenging task for any government to manage and administer so that the ultimate aim of governance is characterized through policies and programmes of governments therefore good governance connotes welfare and development of citizens .*

Key Words: Good Governance, local self government

Concept of Good Governance

Good governance is associated with efficient and effective administration in a democratic framework, while governance refers to a political system whether democratic or not. The concept connotes different things to different people. For instance, international organizations ,like the World Bank, associate good governance primarily with capacity building and the exercise of political power needed for efficient and effective management of concrete national programmes, whether the political system is democratic or not¹.

According to Goran Hyden² are three requirements of good governance viz (a) citizen influence and oversight , b) responsive and responsible leadership, and (c) Social reciprocities. For yet another group of writers ,good governance implies presence of rule of law ,safeguarding of basic human rights ,presence of honest and efficient government, accountability, predictability, and openness³. For Jefferies, good governance is equivalent to purposive and development-oriented administration which is committed to improvement of quality of life of

the mass of people without necessarily being democratic in style⁴. Therefore good governance Connotes welfare and development of citizens .In a country like ours which is sovereign , Democratic ,Secular ,Socialist republic it is obligatory for the government to formulate such public policies in foreign , domestic ,political economic and social spheres that in empirical terms we can see reflections of our constitutional goals of democracy ,human dignity integrity ,unity and development .

In many third world countries even since the beginning of decolonization process of the 1940's decentralization of power have been part of the process of nation building and socio-economic development .Decentralization implies dispersal of power and authority from the Centre to the state or local levels, the Centre of an organization disperses power to the people at the periphery or field offices or government at the grassroots level . Decentralization is a centrifugal force in society that aims at transfer of as much authority and responsibility for performance of as many functions of the community as possible to people or government as far away as centre, while Centralization is a centripetal force working in

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society which pushes the greatest possible part of community activity towards the centre.⁵Decentralization take four major types , that is (1) Deconcentration (2) Delegation , (3) Devolution of authority (Political, administrative and financial),(4) debureaucratization. Of these, devolution of authority by the government is the only method which permits maximum participation of the people at the local levels in the processes of governance.

Politics as The Process of Governance

Politics is the process by which a group of people govern themselves and it is an inevitable part of people living together .The study of politics therefore involves understanding how people govern themselves and consequences of the political process . Urban governance connotes the process of governing urban areas .It encompasses the functioning of urban government interactions of political and administrative elements in urban government .The people of the area as beneficiaries of civic amenities interact with local politicians and administrators, managing urban government .Therefore, governance of country involves interplay of politico-administrative elements at all levels central ,state and local-rural and urban. The word “politics “ stems from polis the Greek city-states such as athens at the time of Plato and Aristotle . Aristotle in his discussion of human associations, stated that the “most sovereign and inclusion association is the polis as it is called, or the political association.”Urbanus in Latin means “of the city'. It also means “refined” or “polished . Other words like the “metropolis” and “megalopolis” are connected with the city and its different manifestations.

We believe that the Socratic-Platonic doctrine .that “virtue is knowledge “,i.e the belief that there is objectively good life both for the individual and for the states which may be the object of study ,which may be defined by methodological intellectual processes and which may be intelligently pursued⁶ . Also the evolution of Roman law and the Holy Roman Empire provide ample evidences for the teaching of art and Science of politics.

Some terms⁷ used for local authorities older still, deriving from Greek and Latin .Koinotes (community) and demos (People or district) are the names of Greek local authorities today .Municipality and its variant came from the ancient Roman administrative law term municipium .City comes from civis (citizen) country comes from Comitates ,which is derived from comes (court), the office of an imperial official .But the institutions which gave a recognized status to local government in early middle ages in Europe were tutonic or Greman ;burg,borough and the French bourg from the root meaning 'protect' or 'hide' which survives in the German Bargaen town from old English tun, and enclosure, and the German stadt from words for place or dwelling .The medieval cite or city devoted a large settlement with privileges .Town,borough and city all originally devoted fortified enclosures into which the local population could retreat when under external threat.

Modern⁸ concepts of national sovereignty developed from claims to absolute power by royalty in the 16 th 17 th centuries .Jean Bodin gave the classical definition of sovereignty developed from claims to absolute power by royalty in the 16th and 17 th centuries Jean Bodin gave the classical definition of sovereignty . Later Montesquieu (1689-1755) wrote ,” if in a monarchy you abolish the prerogatives of the lords ,the clergy ,the gentry and the cities you will have a popular state or else a despotism .He further said ,municipalities and other local bodies moderate the power of a sovereign while at the same time enjoying some delegating sovereign powers .In Britain, David Hume (1711-76) wrote of the idea of the perfect commonwealth, as a country of a hundred countries,each divided into a hundred parishes ,the whole ruled by a hundred senators, one from each country .Turgot (1727-81),Frenchman who proposed a three level hierarchy of 'municipalities' .

In the united states under the influence of Jefferson (1743-1826) decided to subdivide its north west territories geometrically with a tier on tier division and subdivision of government responsibilities from nation to township .De

Toquevelli⁹ wrote of his experience in the US 'The village of township is the only association that is perfectly natural that wherever a number of men are collected it seems to constitute itself' In the East in ancient China the teachings of Confucious (500-B.C) have laid the framework for administrators to act and development through training that continue to characterise modern governance¹⁰.

In ancient India the education in politics, statecraft and public administration was given through the gurukul system¹¹ of learning by Kautilya the author of Arthashatra (300 B.C) and by others .The Arthashatra is often compared with Machiavell's The Prince because both these political masterpieces favoured subordination of ethical principles to considerations of "expediency" and the political doctrine that "ends justifies¹² the mean."

Among other political works in India belonging to the early period of the Christian era, the most notables are Nitisara of Kamandaki, the Nitivakayamitra of Somadeva Suri, and the Nitisara which is attributed to Sukracharya¹³. Also Thirukurall¹⁴, Written in Tamil ,by the great sage and poet Thiruvalluvar-a classic attributed to the fourth century A.D, The Hindu epics-Ramayana and Mahabhartar contain valuable politico-administrative ideas ,the Smritis , Puranas ,religious books of the Buddhists and Jainas, historical and dramatic literature, accounts of foreign travellers, epigraphic records and few treatises that deal specially with politics¹⁵.

Politics is defined in many ways . One approach is that politics is the process of making governmental politics , the making of decisions by public means, the authoritative allocation of values ,the quest for power ,and so forth. The ethical scope of political activities has been candidly expressed by Peter Merkl in the following words " At its best ,politics is a noble quest for a good order and justice and its worst , a selfish grab for power ,glory and riches¹⁶.

To, most political thinkers the word politics denotes all the activities and processes that take place in the public realm ,some overt and others

of a more covert nature .Van Dyke¹⁷ puts it, "politics can be defined as struggle among actors pursuing conflicting desires on public issues.' Quincy wright¹⁸ in the context of international politics writes that' politics is the art of influencing or controlling major groups in the world so as to advance the purpose of some against the opposition of others :'' While political scientists deal primarly with politics within the public realm , ,politics is not limited to the public realm . As stated by Robert A. Dahl¹⁹ the political arena transcends the public realm .In his words " A political system is any persistent pattern of human relationship that involves , to a significant extent power ,rule or authority ."

Politics is a much wider than the state as politics is a process and the state is merely an institution. In politics all the political processes in society are studied. The government is smaller in scope than the state. in order to endure,"writes Jorgen Rasmussen²⁰, a system must process demands efficiently even though their number and urgency increase sharply.

David Easton's System Model

Arthur Bentley and the concept of process:

Bentley's²¹ two fold contribution to the new political science was(a) the idea of the group as the true level of reality for political understanding and investigation, and (b) the concept of process as the only valid approach to the understanding of this reality. The process of government was described by Bertram Gross²² as one of the most important books on government ever written in America and of the most important books on government to have been written in any country.

Bentley²³ had a great faith in measurement and quantification. "it is impossible to attain scientific treatment of material that will not submit itself to measurement in some form. Measurement conquers Chaos."

Charles Merriam took upon himself the responsibility of propagating the inter disciplinary and scientific approach to politics. In the middle and late sixties,socio-political turbulence marked American life, which had

generated some challenges towards politics. The purpose of politics was defined as “which is guided not towards the indoctrination of men and the directives of science, but the enlistment of science in the cause of man; and thus, a political science which can serve the poor, oppressed, and underdeveloped peoples at home and abroad in their struggle against the established hierarchies, elites and institutional forms of manipulation.”²⁴

Urban Governance: Patterns and Politics

Local self-government is the fulfillment as well as the foundation of democracy. It is at once the home and the nursery of democracy, it can nurture people's interest in their community and provide a channel of communication in the management of local affairs²⁵. With the commencement of the planning process in the country, it was realized that the local government could also be an effective tool for local development. “Politics continues to dominate municipal affairs and seems certain to go on dominating them for as long as municipal institutions exist”²⁶.

The city today, is no longer a single political entity. It is, on the one hand, a corporate legal person having a well defined territorial jurisdiction under a statutory governmental organization; on the other it is socio-economic and geographic entity, encompassing within its fold a number of authorities, functioning and territorial-urban governments are called upon to undertake a variety of activities and provide civic amenities and community facilities. Local government is the executive arm for the performance of a great variety of functions and execution of local works with an added emphasis on public relations and people's participation. There are two basic types of urban government in India²⁷ Municipality in small towns and cities and Municipal Corporation in big cities. The municipality has a directly elected council (Board) which elects its chairman and forms the standing committees. Under the unified or integrated municipal personnel system, the executive officer comes from 'outside', virtually from the state government and exhibit an attitude which is more state oriented than

municipality oriented²⁸.

In the big cities, the management pattern reveals a sharing of governing power between the elected corporation, standing committees and the municipal commissioner, who is legally one of the municipal authorities. The²⁹ municipal administration suffers generally from poor local pressures; and had antiquated systems of internal management.

Politics thus remains at all levels of governance, “civilized³⁰ life and organized society depend upon the existence of governments, and what governments should do and can do with their power and authority depends, in turn on the political structure and beliefs of the subsidiary societies within the range of these governments.” On the one hand we have writers like H.R.G. Greaves³¹ and others who regard “Politics is concerned, among other things, with conflict-over the proper use of force, power and authority,” on the other Harold G. Lasswell³² among other writers. “Politics is a conflict resolution process that determines who gets, what when and how.” We can sum up in these words, “Politics³³ is the process by which power is employed to affect whether and how government will be used in any given area”. Thus governance and administration as far as urban local self-government is concerned is very much significant area as citizen-administration interface is direct which also calls for people's participatory, democratic approach of governance

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