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GOVERNANCE TRANSFORMED



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Viksit Bharat @2047

Governance Transformed

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Introduction

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Governance has often been defined as the manner in which the authority, control, and power of an elected government are exercised in mobilising a society's economic and social resources to address issues of public interest. It also refers to the interaction between government and other factors of the social sphere, including the process of decision-making in a complex set of circumstances. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) views governance as the exercise of political, economic, and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs at all levels. Similarly, the World Bank defines governance as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the concept of governance denotes the use of political authority and the exercise of control in a society in relation to the management of its resources for social and economic development. In a unitary system, it refers to the national government and its administrative management of the country. However, in a federal system such as India, it refers to both the national and

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state-level governments which manage areas of responsibility duly assigned to them by the Constitution of the country.

Governments operate in the world of public policy. Policy can broadly be defined as a proposed course of action by an individual, a group, an institution, or a government to realise a specific collective objective within a given environment. Public policies are goal-oriented, formulated, and implemented with a view to attaining the objectives which the government considers essential for the ultimate benefit of the masses in general. Thus, it can be said that the objective of public policy is always, and for all times, the betterment of the entire society. Good governance is required to ensure that policies have their desired effect.

In this context, it is essential to think of the present systems of government as a natural progression of the historical and sociological context from which it evolved. The sub-continent we inhabit, vast as it was and is, grew from the great empires that ruled over it across the millennia preceding. Undoubtedly, they were disparate and varied, and as diverse as it was possible to be: from the great realms of the Deccan to the magnificent empires of the Mauryas, the Mughals, and the Marathas. When British mercantilism gained a foot hold in the subcontinent, we experienced depravation and exploitation, leading to the impoverishment of a once flourishing economy. The British government took over the affairs of the land in 1858 and set about creating instruments of governance, most of which still survive today. These include the Westminster form of parliamentary democracy and government, the bicameral legislative control, the judicial systems from sub-district to federal level, the modes of collection of taxes, etc., including the establishment of the pivotal role of the district as the basic unit of administration and the creation of a civil service to manage the affairs of state and country. With the dawn of freedom in 1947 and the formation of the Republic of India in 1950, we became an independent and sovereign nation with the capability and competence to manage our own affairs. With

time, we grew to be the most populous country in the world, being the fifth largest economy and an enviable skilled labour force, showcasing a demographic structure that promises rich dividends in the days ahead.

In the 75 years gone by, we have transformed ourselves from an improvised and controlled socialistic country with a planned economy, taking ourselves through dynamic economic reform in the early 1990s, to a thriving nation where free enterprise is encouraged, even as the poor and deprived are fully provided for with massive budgetary support through national and state-level programmes that take care of them. The three quarters of a century that has gone by have seen dramatic growth in nearly all sectors. According to NITI Aayog, India's GDP which stood at ₹4.97 lakh crore in 1950–1951 (at constant prices) has climbed to ₹173.82 lakh crore in 2023–2024. In the mid-1950s, it was estimated that 65% of the country's population was below the poverty line; today it is about 5%. Life expectancy which was about 36 years in 1950 stands today at 68 for men and 71 for women. Literacy was but less than 20% then; it is over 74% today.

The changes have been invigorating and have drawn the attention of India watchers abroad and thinkers and policy formulators within the country. It is in this context that the concept of Public Policy and Good Governance has once again started to arouse the keen interest of researchers, academicians, and policymakers in the government. It has also been felt that policy experts in and outside the government are required to have a good understanding of how policy decisions are made, how the government functions, the nature of the environment in which the government is embedded, the interplay between the government and the environment, and how this interplay affects policy choices. The chapters of this volume have been written by authors, many of them were career administrators, who have held important assignments at the level of the Government of India. The subjects cover a wide array of disciplines and reflect the observations of those who have

formulated policy and have overseen their implementation over the last four or five decades. The book consists of twenty chapters examining in depth the many different and complex aspects of public policy and governance.

Shri V. Srinivas, in the chapter “Viksit Bharat: New Paradigms in Governance—Empowering Citizens and Reaching the Last Mile,” focuses on the period from 2019 to 2024 which marks a transformative era in Indian governance, characterised by new paradigms that prioritised accountability, transparency, and inclusiveness. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India’s governance model embraced Next Generation Reforms, bridging the gap between government and citizens through technology and innovative practices. The Digital March, led by the Central Secretariat and supported by state-level e-Governance initiatives, revolutionised service delivery and public grievance redressal. The emphasis on efficiency, effectiveness, and modern digital institutions positioned India as a global leader in digital public infrastructure, with significant impacts on rural areas and regions like Jammu and Kashmir. This governance evolution reflects the nation’s broader vision of a Viksit Bharat, or a developed India, during its Amrit Kaal (2022–2047).

The chapter “The Institution of Civil Service of India” by Dr. N. Ravi Shanker highlights the historical evolution of the civil service in India, tracing its roots from the Mauryan Empire through the Mughal period to British rule and its continuation in independent India. It highlights the significance of the civil service in governance, particularly the influence of the East India Company (EIC) and the British Raj in shaping modern administrative structures. The chapter examines the transition from traditional governance methods to the establishment of a formal, merit-based civil service system, comparing it to similar developments in other parts of the world, such as China. The key aspects include the importance of loyalty, kinship, and merit in civil service appointments, as well as the role of the civil service in sustaining governance values. The analysis

emphasises the need for the civil service to adapt to contemporary challenges remain relevant.

Dr. R. S. Sharma's chapter "Improving Public Service Delivery: An Indian Experience" provides a comprehensive analysis of India's Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system, which aims to modernise and digitise the delivery of welfare benefits to enhance efficiency, transparency, and inclusivity. The chapter presents the historical context of welfare distribution in India, the challenges of traditional benefit delivery systems, and the transformative impact of the DBT initiative. The key components discussed include the creation of unique identities through Aadhaar, the role of technology in financial inclusion, and the integration of banking systems with mobile technology to ensure seamless fund transfers. The essay also identifies the challenges faced during implementation, such as Aadhaar seeding accuracy and connectivity issues in rural areas, as well as the success stories of DBT in various sectors.

Dr. Siraj Hussain, in the chapter on "Indian Agriculture: Green Revolution Stagnates, Allied Sectors Grow," discusses multifarious aspects of Indian agriculture, including the Green Revolution and the growth of allied sectors. India's agricultural sector, once revolutionised by the Green Revolution, faces new challenges as it grapples with the stagnation of crop productivity and the environmental impacts of intensive farming practices. While the Green Revolution ensured food security for the nation, it also led to soil degradation, water depletion, and health concerns due to chemical use. However, the past two decades have seen significant growth in allied sectors like horticulture, dairy, and fisheries, showcasing India's adaptability and resilience. The success of these sectors, combined with advances in science and governance, has allowed India to not only maintain food security but also inspire other nations facing similar challenges. This evolution underscores the importance of sustainable agricultural practices in the face of climate change.

Dr. Noor Mohammad, in “Building of a Thriving Democracy in India,” examines the evolution of democratic governance and the challenges faced in India, with a keen eye on how electoral democracy grew and flourished. Recognising that the spirit of democracy requires a congenial environment to flourish, this study assesses the strengths and weaknesses of India’s democratic system. Drawing on international best practices, including election observation and the recommendations of the Electoral Integrity Project, it identifies areas for improvement to ensure the objectives of free and fair elections. The chapter explores potential electoral reform proposals with a view to deepen democracy in India and addresses concerns and shortcomings to enhance the integrity and effectiveness of the electoral process.

The concept of “Vishwa Guru” or “Teacher of the World” reflects India’s historical role as a global knowledge leader, excelling in science, mathematics, astronomy, and more. This has been elaborated by Amb. Anil Trigunayat in the chapter “Vishwa Guru and Vishwa Mitra: Relations with the World.” India’s contributions, such as the invention of zero, have laid the foundation for modern scientific advancements. As India approaches the 100th year of independence, it aspires to reclaim this status. Additionally, India is also emerging as “Vishwa Mitra” or “Friend of the World,” as has been demonstrated by its global humanitarian efforts, including Vaccine Maitri during the COVID-19 pandemic and its leadership as the “Voice of the Global South” during its G20 Presidency. India’s unique ability to blend tradition with modernity has solidified its cultural diplomacy and soft power, positioning it as a global leader. The principles of non-violence and truth, as championed by Mahatma Gandhi, continue to influence India’s international relations, promoting a non-intrusive yet impactful form of leadership.

India’s rapid economic growth over the past two decades has been closely linked with the development of quality infrastructure. The chapter “Infrastructure Development:

Bridging the Critical Gaps” by Dr. V. Sathyanarayana and Shri K. Jayakishan examines the initiatives taken by the central and state governments to boost the infrastructure sector, which is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.2% by 2027. The chapter reviews the harmonised master list of infrastructure sub-sectors, focusing on key areas such as transportation, energy, and telecommunications, which constitute nearly 70% of the National Infrastructure Pipeline. By mapping the growth of these sectors since India’s independence, the chapter identifies critical gaps and challenges. It also discusses significant projects, policies, and regulations, recommending steps to achieve the infrastructure goals outlined in Vision@2047, which aims to make India a developed nation.

India’s digital transformation has been pivotal in driving its economic development, with investments in digital infrastructure and governance reforms leading to substantial savings, estimated at 1.1% of GDP by March 2021. Shri Alkesh Kumar Sharma, in the chapter “Digital Public Infrastructure as Digital Public Good,” examines the impact of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) on economic growth, focusing on the government’s role in enhancing productivity and reducing leakages in social programmes. Citing studies by the UNDP, the chapter suggests that DPI initiatives could contribute to a 1–1.4 percentage point increase in GDP growth by 2030, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. The study highlights India’s journey in digital transformation and its potential as a model for other developing nations to catalyse economic growth through DPI.

Dr. Sanjeev Chopra’s chapter “The Medium Is ‘More’ than the Message” elaborates on the contribution of Indian culture in creating the soft power of India. In the contemporary global landscape, the concept of soft power has gained prominence, contrasting traditional notions of military and economic dominance with cultural and ideological influence. Originating from Joseph Nye’s formulation, soft power is defined by a

nation's ability to attract and co-opt others into desiring its preferred outcomes through cultural appeal, political values, and foreign policies perceived as legitimate and morally authoritative. For India, anchored deeply in its civilisational ethos and cultural heritage predating its modern statehood, soft power manifests through its rich tapestry of ancient wisdom, vibrant arts, and philosophical traditions encapsulated in texts like Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and the epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Leveraging public diplomacy, India strategically promotes its cultural assets, supported by a dynamic diaspora that enhances its global footprint. However, challenges persist in optimising these resources, requiring coordinated efforts to strengthen institutional frameworks, expand cultural outreach, and assert influence commensurate with its geopolitical stature. As India navigates towards securing a greater role on the global stage, the strategic integration of soft power becomes pivotal in shaping international perceptions and advancing national interests.

Dr. Amarjit Singh highlights the many complex issues in the health sector in India in the chapter "Problems and Prospects in the Health Sector in India: Learning from the Past Going Forward." The evolution of India's health sector is deeply intertwined with its colonial past, marked by high mortality rates due to frequent epidemics, famines, and inadequate medical infrastructure. Between 1891 and 1921, the death toll from diseases like cholera, malaria, plague, and influenza was staggering, exacerbated by recurrent famines and the colonial government's laissez-faire response. The early 20th century witnessed a dire shortage of medical professionals, which severely impacted public health and life expectancy. However, post-1921, a significant decline in death rates was achieved due to improved sanitation, mass vaccination, and malaria treatment, setting the stage for a gradual increase in population and life expectancy. This period, known as the "Great Divide," marked a pivotal shift in India's demographic and health

landscape, laying the groundwork for future health improvements.

The chapter by Chiranjiv Choudhary on “Climate Change and the Environment: With Special Sections on Energy and Water” discusses climate change and the environment with a special focus on key sectors such as energy and water. The acceleration of climate change poses significant environmental and socio-economic threats, including water and energy insecurity. Every continent is affected by water scarcity, with predictions indicating that by 2030, nearly half of the global population will experience high water stress, further exacerbating energy security concerns. Despite the growing impact of climate change on water and energy resources, most communities lack resilience to face these changes. The global average surface temperature has already risen by approximately 1.1°C since pre-industrial times, intensifying extreme weather events. If it rises by 4°C to 6°C by 2100, it will lead to irreversible environmental shifts. While 189 nations have committed to reducing CO₂ emissions by 30% by 2030, global emissions continue to rise. Urgent measures are required to limit global warming to 1.5°C and transition towards climate-resilient development for a sustainable future.

The chapter entitled “The Evolution of the Constitution of India” by Shri Devender Singh Aswal, explores the historical development of India’s Constitution, from ancient Vedic republican traditions to its modern framework. The chapter highlights key legislative acts during British rule, such as the Regulating Act of 1773 and the Government of India Act of 1935, which laid the foundation for India’s constitutional journey. It also details the framing of the Constitution by the Constituent Assembly, influenced by global models and the need for a robust democratic structure. The chapter concludes by discussing the Constitution’s unique features, such as federalism, balance of powers, fundamental rights, and judicial review, emphasising its role as a dynamic and enduring document.

Durga Shanker Mishra describes India's urban renaissance, which has been empowering cities and transforming the nation in the chapter "Urban Development: Rise of the City-State India's Urban Renaissance, Empowering Cities, Transforming the Nation." Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2022 Independence Day address outlined a transformative vision for India@2047, aiming for a developed nation by its centennial year. This vision encompasses economic growth, social progress, environmental sustainability, good governance, and an enhanced quality of life for all citizens. Central to this vision is the rejection of colonial mindsets, embracing India's rich heritage, fostering unity, and instilling a sense of duty and integrity. Guided by the principles of "Collective Efforts, Inclusive Growth, Trust of All, and Efforts of All," and the catch phrase of "Reform, Perform and Transform," India is on a path of rapid development. The chapter explores the historical context, current policies, and future projections, emphasising the crucial role of urban development in realising the vision of a developed India by 2047.

In the chapter "Rural Development: The Village in Focus," Dr. Jugal Mohapatra discusses the evolution of rural development programmes in India, tracing their progression from the 1950s and 1960s. The initial focus, driven by the Mahalanobis model and Gandhian ideals, aimed at industrial diversification, self-sufficiency, and revitalising the rural agrarian economy. The community development programme sought to empower rural communities through participatory planning and the strengthening of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The mid-1960s introduced the Green Revolution, emphasising technology transfer, high-yielding crop varieties, and agricultural extension services to achieve food self-sufficiency. Despite these advancements, benefits were mainly confined to irrigated areas, leaving other regions and social groups underserved. By the early 1970s, it was apparent that growth rates did not effectively reduce poverty, with about 55% of the population still classified as poor. The uneven

distribution of growth benefits highlighted the need for more inclusive and effective rural development strategies.

The chapter on “Development in Public Administration and Governance” by Dr. Anita Chaudhary tracks the evolution of public administration and governance in India, tracing its roots through ancient texts such as Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*, which provides timeless insights into statecraft and governance. The chapter delves into Kautilya’s recommended strategies for addressing internal strife and external threats, underscoring the treatise’s emphasis on dharma—righteousness and justice—as essential for the well-being of subjects. The impacts of colonial rule on the centralised administrative structure post-Independence are analysed, while also highlighting the challenges posed by entrenched inefficiencies and corruption. As globalisation and technological advancements reshape governance, the author discusses the rise of New Public Management (NPM) and the shift towards decentralisation and performance-driven public services. Despite significant efforts to enhance governance, India faces mixed outcomes in global governance rankings, particularly highlighted by its position in the World Governance Index (WGI). It also looks at critiques against the current governance indices, emphasising the need for context-sensitive indicators and the importance of recognising the diverse institutional landscapes across countries. The analysis extends to India’s ambitious initiatives like the Digital India programme and financial inclusion efforts, which aim to harness technology for better governance and welfare delivery.

The chapter “Higher Education: From Dream to Reality for Every Indian” by Ashok Thakur and S. S. Mantha analyses India’s higher education landscape, tracing its evolution from ancient Gurukul traditions to the modern era. India’s higher education system, with 44.3 million students, is the second largest globally, following China. The number of institutions—1,168 universities, 45,473 colleges, and 12,002 stand-alone institutions—has grown over 400% since 2001, predominantly

driven by the private sector. Notable achievements include the success of Indian alumni like Sundar Pichai and Satya Nadella, highlighting the system's global impact. However, challenges persist, particularly in quality and employability, with only 46.7% of graduates deemed employable. Despite a modest increase in education funding, the current allocation represents only 2.9% of GDP, falling short of the 6% target set by the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986. Research investment is also low at 0.64% of GDP, lagging behind other major economies. Addressing these issues is crucial for ensuring that the expansion of higher education benefits all regions, including less developed areas, and avoiding commercialisation pitfalls.

In the chapter “Democratic Decentralisation: Power to the People,” Prof. Anil B. Suraj expresses the view that the development of any nation, whether economic or social, hinges on the efficient distribution and use of resources. In the context of public welfare, the challenge lies not only in the provision of essential goods and services but also in the efficiency of the distributive mechanisms that ensure equitable access. Public administration, as a field of study, examines the people, processes, and principles that govern the optimal use of resources for the betterment of society. In designing systems aimed at large-scale distributive efficiency, localisation and decentralisation are often the preferred approaches. In India, the challenge of achieving equitable and sustainable public welfare is further complicated by the nation's vast size and diversity. As the most populous country in the world, India's public governance and administration must continuously evolve to address issues of equity and efficiency in social welfare and economic development. Factors such as population, regional plurality, and cultural heterogeneity add layers of complexity to this task. The diversity of India is reflected in its 22 constitutionally recognised languages and the varied socio-economic conditions across its 28 states. The Constituent Assembly of India, with representatives from over 40 provinces

and princely states, encapsulated this diversity and the inherent challenges in policy-making and governance. The principle of “Unity in Diversity” aptly captures the essence of India’s approach to governance, aiming to unify the nation while respecting its inherent differences.

Ms. Shalini Prasad, in the chapter “Building Social Capital Through Gender Inclusion,” discusses how social capital can be enhanced through gender inclusion. Post-independence, India embarked on a journey to fulfil the constitutional promise of a vibrant democratic republic, where every citizen, irrespective of gender, would enjoy dignity and equality. However, the socio-cultural milieu, characterised by conservatism and patriarchy, posed significant challenges to achieving this vision. Gender, as a cross-cutting identity, remained a major social category excluded from policy and decision-making, resulting in pervasive disparities across sectors such as health, education, employment, and political representation. Recognising that gender equality is not only an end in itself but also a means to societal progress, the successive Five-Year Plans integrated equity and equality as foundational principles of development. Early interventions focused on social welfare, led by the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB), laid the groundwork for a more inclusive growth model that addresses the needs of women and promotes their full participation in the nation’s development. Recent innovations to enhance gender equality across the gamut of social development have been highlighted in the chapter.

In the chapter “Social Justice and Affirmative Action,” Dr. Amarjeet Sinha analyses the influence of the Indian Constitution on shaping public policies aimed at achieving social justice through affirmative action. By examining key indicators of human well-being from the time of India’s independence to the present, the chapter assesses how multi-dimensional poverty and social disparities have been addressed over 75 years. It delves into the impact of affirmative action on social participation within India’s evolving democracy, analysing the performance of different states, the role of

devolution, and the significance of educating girls. Additionally, the chapter considers the influence of social and political movements on advancing social justice. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of current achievements and future steps necessary to ensure that every Indian citizen has the opportunity to realise their full potential and live a fulfilling life, highlighting the role of affirmative action in enhancing political participation.

Aadil Zainulbhai delves into the potential trajectory of India as it marches towards becoming a fully developed nation by the year 2047, marking the centenary of its independence in the chapter “Into the Crystal Ball: Looking Towards 2047.” India’s economic growth has been nothing short of remarkable, with its GDP reaching US\$3.42 trillion, positioning it as the world’s fifth largest economy. The chapter explores the reforms and policies that have propelled this growth and the demographic advantages that will support sustained development. By 2027, India is expected to become the world’s third largest economy, with its GDP projected to reach US\$30 trillion by 2047. The concept of “Viksit Bharat”—a developed India—envisioned a nation that provides equality of opportunity and fully realises the capabilities of its citizens. The paper also reflects on Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s call for a collective resolution towards achieving the goal of a developed India, emphasising the role of both institutions and individuals in this mission.

In many ways, this volume of essays encapsulates the bold strides made by independent India in the last 75 years in all areas of governance. It could serve as a handbook for those interested in the story of progress that this country has achieved in these seven and a half decades. It could also provide lessons for other countries that are still struggling on the path of comprehensive development. The volume would also serve as a reference book for any thinking person interested in learning how India navigated the path of development in these past years.

We are very grateful to all the contributors of the present volume for their keen interest and cooperation, without which this venture would not have seen the light of day. We hope this volume will help administrators, researchers, policymakers, academicians, and all those genuinely concerned with public policy and governance. We would be remiss in our duties if we do not state that Shri V. Srinivas, IAS, Director General, NCGG and Secretary, Department of Administrative Reforms, Government of India, has been the guiding spirit behind this work.