

Unit 25

Local Self Government and the Emergence of Voluntary Organisation

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Learning Objectives

A study of this unit will enable you to:

- define the institution of local government
- distinguish between local government and local self-government
- discuss the evolution of urban local government in India
- describe the Nagarpalika Bill, 1989
- explain the different functions of the municipalities
- describe the Metropolitan Planning Committee (MPC)
- discuss the suggestions the improvement in functioning of Local Administration; and
- describe the emergence of the voluntary Organisations in India.

25.1 Introduction

The present unit focusses on the concept of local self government particularly the urban local self government. It also throws light on the emergence and function of the voluntary organisation in the context of rapid urbanisation and industrialisation. The importance of the urban local governments in India has considerably increased in post independent era

with the inauguration of the Constitution embodying the principle of democracy and a welfare state and emphasizing upon the governments in urban areas to promote social and economic development. In this unit a brief sketch of the emergence of the urban local bodies (ULBs) is being traced, taking into account the pre-independence period and the post independence developments in this field. There is also a brief explanation of the Nagarpalika bill and the new approaches to the local self governments in India in the period of rapid urbanisation. The types of urban local bodies have been discussed in details and their significance and mode of functioning has been discussed in this unit. At the end of the discussion some important suggestions have been put forth for the improvement of the local bodies in the changed circumstances.

The voluntary organisations take part in the new initiatives in the field of the development and progress in the field of civil society. They play an important role in this regard. Their role does not end with the creation of awareness among the people and capacity building in them but is redefined in order to pass on institutional learning both inter group and intra-group, thus becoming a core of learning for newer groups. Thus this unit concludes with the fact that the local government and the role of voluntary organisations are closely linked with each other.

25.2 Local Government: Few Definitions

Local governments have been defined in numerous ways. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica “an authority to determine and execute measures within a restricted area inside and smaller than the whole state. The variant local-self government is important for its emphasis on the freedom to decide the act.” According to P. Stones “local government is that part of the government of a country which deals with the people in a particular locality.” According to L. Golding “local government is the management of their own affairs by the people of a locality”. A more appropriate definition of local government has been given by K. Venkatarangaiya. To him, “local government is the administration of a locality-a village, a city or any other area smaller than the state-by a body representing the local inhabitants, possessing a fairly large amount of autonomy, raising at least a part of its revenue through local taxation and spending its income on services

which are regarded as local and therefore distinct from state and central services. Professor W.A Robson opines that the local government may be said to involve the conception of a territorial, non-sovereign community possessing the legal rights and the necessary organization to regulate its own affairs. Thus the essential characteristics of a local government are:

i) Local area

It is a well defined area which is fixed by the respective state government. This area can be termed as a city, town, or a village.

ii) Local authority

The administration of a particular locality is run by an authority or body of persons who are elected directly by the people in that particular area.

iii) Civic amenities for local inhabitants

The primary objective of the local government is to provide certain civic amenities to the people at their door step. These services are specifically meant for those inhabitants who are living in that restricted area for which the local government unit has been created.

iv) Local finance

Normally the local governments raise their finances locally and through several grants given by central and the respective state governments. The local government raises the finance by tax which is being paid by the residents of that particular area.

v) Local autonomy

Local autonomy means the freedom of the local bodies in discharge of their duties. It implies the legal rights of the inhabitants of a local area to choose their representatives to govern the particular area, according to legal laws framed by the local council, and to adopt the budget subject to law. But it should be clear that the authorities which have been given the responsibility to run the local government are neither sovereign nor self created entities and they will have to depend upon the higher level of government for their creation, rank, powers and functions.

vi) Local participation

The local government should encourage the local people to participate in the local developmental programmes. The local participation is a must for the success of any development programme or policies.

vii) Local leadership

A strong leadership is a prerequisite for a local government success. This leadership is provided to the people from the local area in the shape of elected representatives and elected office bearers of the elected councils in regard to the policies and programmes of the government.

viii) Local accountability.

Local government units are directly accountable to the local people. The citizen of the local area keeps a close watch on the local authorities to ensure effective performance in their functions.

ix) Local development.

Local government is concerned with the overall development of the people living in a particular area or the area itself. Every activity of local government unit is an approach to development.

25.3 Distinction Between Local Government and Local- Self Government

Local government and local self government are interchangeably used. The term local self government is used in those countries which were under the colonial rule. After India got independence, it used only the local government instead of local self government because the entire country is ruled by the people not only local government. That is why the term local government instead of local self government is used in Entry 5 of list II of the seventh schedule of our Constitution. Despite this distinction, both the terms continue to be in vogue in our country. The term signifies a government, representative of local inhabitants, more or less autonomous in character, instituted under state legislation, in a village, a district, a city or in urban areas to administer services as distinguished from state and central services.

The urban local government is that part of the local government which deals exclusively with the urban affairs. The urban scenario in India is very complex and complicated one. And this complexity poses enormous challenges to the administrative system involved in managing regulatory as well as developmental affairs in urban areas. The scope of urban local governments extends to the study of the phenomenon of urbanisation and its problems, urban planning, structure of urban governments and their classifications, municipal legislation, personnel management, financial administration, special purpose agencies and organisation and functions of union ministry of urban development and its sub-ordinate and attached offices etc. The significance of urban local government lies in the numerous benefits that it bestows upon the inhabitants of the area it operates in. It functions as a school for democracy wherein citizens are imparted political and popular education regarding issues of local and national importance. It develops qualities of initiative, tolerance and compromise- so essential for the working of a democracy. The importance of the urban local governments in India has considerably increased in post independent era with the framing of the Constitution embodying the principle of democracy and a welfare state and emphasizing upon the governments in urban areas to promote social and economic development.

Reflection and Action 25.1

Visit the local administrative office in your city/ town/ village. Interview at best two officers of this administration about the structure and functioning of this office. What roles it performs and how far are they able to serve the people in general.

Write a note on “The Administration Process in my City (Ward or municipal office etc.)/ town/ village” in about two pages. Share your note with other learners at your study center.

25.4 Evolution of Urban Local Government in India**British phase**

The first sign of urban local government can be traced to 1687, with the establishment of Madras Municipal Corporation. Later the Royal charter of 1720 established a

Mayor's court in each of the three presidencies Madras, Bombay and Calcutta. In 1850, an act was passed for the whole of British India permitting the formation of local committees to make better provisions for public health. Lord Mayo's resolution of 1870 made arrangements for strengthening the municipal institutions and increasing the associations of Indians in these bodies. But it was the resolution of Lord Ripon of 18th May 1882 that was hailed as the Magna Carta of local government and he suggested reforms for instilling life into the local bodies. He can be termed as the father of the urban local self government in India. But one thing was clear that the development of the local self government was done to primarily serve the British interests rather than to promote self-governing bodies in the country; that local government institutions were dominated by the British and most of the Indian population remained deprived of the participation in their functioning; that the dominant motive behind the institution of local government in India was to give relief to the imperial finances.

A significant development since Ripon's resolution came up in 1907 when the rising discontent among the Indian masses led to the appointment of the Royal commission on decentralisation, to enquire into the financial and administrative relations of the government of India and the provincial governments and the authorities subordinate to them. In order to increase the devolution of power and gradual democratisation of the local bodies the commission had recommended that the chairman should be elective non-official and the majority of the members should be elected non-officials. The other recommendations were that the municipalities should be given more powers of taxation and control over their budgets. Apart from these the large municipalities should be endowed with greater power and required to appoint qualified health officials along with the executive officials.

The act provided for the reduction of official control over municipal bodies; the provincial governments could introduce the election system in any municipalities and permit the election of non-official chairman. The government of India act 1919 introduced the system of diarchy and the local self government became a transferred

subject under the charge of a popular minister of the provincial legislature. The act increased the taxation powers of the local bodies, lowered the franchise, reduced the nominated elements and extended the communal electorate to a large number of municipalities. Lastly, the government of India act 1935, which emphasized provincial autonomy, again declared local government as a provincial subject. The act earmarked no taxes for local bodies. The municipal institutions were to be revitalized with the introduction of popular ministries. However due to the outbreak of World War II, little progress could be made in this direction. The act of 1935 abolished the system of diarchy and introduced popular governments in the provinces. The British left in 1947 without firmly establishing a self-reliant, vibrant, healthy and efficient system of municipal government.

The post independent period

After independence, on 26 January the constitution of India came into force. In reference to urban self government Entry 5 of the list II of the seventh schedule, viz. the state list says, local government, that is to say, the Constitution and powers of municipal corporations, improvement trusts, District boards, mining settlements authorities and other local authorities for the purpose of local self-government or village administration. Entry 20 of the concurrent list reads “economic and social planning.”

The most important landmark in the evolution of urban local government in the post-independent India is the setting up of Ministry of Urban Development in 1985. Earlier the urban local government was the responsibility of the ministry of health as local government had its beginning in its urge to improve sanitary conditions as recommended by the Royal Army Sanitation Commission (1863). The ministry of health looked after both rural and urban government until 1958 when the former was separated from it and put under the charge of Ministry of Community Development. In 1966, a part of local government namely urban development was made the responsibility of the Ministry of Works and Housing which was renamed the Ministry of Works, Housing and Urban Development. In 1967, the subject of Urban Development was transferred to the Ministry of Health, which was designated as

Ministry of Health, Family Planning, Works, Housing and Urban Development. In 1985 on realizing the magnitude of urban problems resulting from urbanization taking place at alarming pace in the country that the Government of India decided to set up a separate ministry of Urban Development and entrusted it the responsibility of broad policy formulation and monitoring programmes in the areas of housing, urban development, urban poverty alleviation, urban water supply, and urban transport in addition to construction and maintenance of central government buildings and management of central government land and property.

In August 1988, the Government set up the National Commission on Urbanization (NCU), it subsequently recommended the following measures:

- i) The ministry of Urban development to be restructured to make it the nodal ministry to deal with urbanisation.
- ii) A national urbanisation council (NUC) is set up to formulate urbanisation policies and monitor and evaluate the implementation of the policies.
- iii) An Indian Council for Citizens Action (ICCA) be created to encourage citizens through organised voluntary efforts.
- iv) Every town, with a population of more than 50,000, be provided with an urban community department, through which development programmes be implemented.

25.5 Nagarpalika Bill, 1989

The government has introduced the nagarpalika bill in august, 1989 with a view to give power to the people and to strengthen, revamp and rejuvenate urban local governments. Its main provision were the constitution of Nagar Panchayats for areas in transition from rural to urban areas, ward committees in nagarpalikas and zonal committees in maha nagarpalikas, reservations for scheduled castes/scheduled tribes and women, finance commission to recommend the principles to ensure soundness of local bodies finances, conduct of elections by central election commission, audit of accounts by the comptroller and auditor general of India and above all, the grant of constitutional status to local bodies. In this bill, mainly three types of nagarpalikas

were envisaged; (i) nagar panchayat for a population of 10,000-20,000, (ii) municipal council for urban areas with a population between 20,000-3,00,000 and (iii) municipal corporation for urban areas with a population exceeding 3,00,000. The bill was passed by Lok Sabha but it was defeated in the Rajya Sabha by a narrow margin of three votes.

Again in 1991, when congress ministry came into power, it introduced the bill with slight modifications. It was passed by both the houses of Parliament in December, 1992. Later on it came into existence as the constitution 74th amendment act, 1992. The act introduces a new part, namely, part IX A, in the Constitution. This part deals with issues relating to municipalities such as their structure and composition, reservation of seats, elections, powers and functions, finances, and some miscellaneous provisions. The 74th Amendment thus gives a constitutional status to the municipalities.

To conclude It may be observed that the evolution of urban local government in the post independent India has been characterised by the inertia on the part of the central governments and the state governments as is evidenced by the sporadic and piecemeal efforts made by them in realising and recognising the significance of the city governments and taking half hearted measures in improving their organisation and functioning. It was only during 1980s that the central government took decision of setting-up of the Ministry of Urban Development, appointment of national commission of urbanisation and introducing nagarpalika bill in 1989 and 1991 to rejuvenate the urban self government institutions in the country.

The following types of urban bodies are constituted for the urban administration in India.

- i) Municipal Corporation
- ii) Municipal Council/Committee/Municipality.
- iii) Notified area Committee.
- iv) Town Area Committee.
- v) Township.
- vi) Cantonment Board and Special Purpose Agency/Authority.

Municipal corporations are set-up in big and large cities. The council of the corporation is headed by a Mayor and its standing committees constitute the deliberative wing which takes decisions. The Municipal Commissioner the executive authority, responsible for enforcing these decisions. Collectively, headed by the Mayor, the standing committees and the Municipal Commissioner make up the corporation. The council of the corporation consists of councillors who function for a period of five years. The Municipal Commissioner of corporation is at the apex of the municipal hierarchy and is the key officer controlling the administrative machinery of the corporation. He is appointed by the state government. Generally officers belonging to the Indian Administrative Services (IAS) are appointed to this post. The traditional civic functions are performed by the municipal bodies.

The municipal council is a statutory body created by an act of the state legislature and the criteria of setting it up varies from state to state. A municipal council consists of elected, coopted and associate members. The council elects from amongst its members, a president for a period of five years. He/She can be removed by the council as well as the state government. The council also elects one or two vice-presidents. The president is the administrative head and he normally presides over the meeting of the council, guides the deliberations and gets the decisions implemented. The state government also appoints the executive officer in the municipal council for the conduct of the general administrative works. He exercises general control and supervision over the municipal office, can transfer clerical employees, prepare the municipal budgets, keeps an eye on the expenditure, is responsible for the collection of the taxes and fees and takes measures for recovering the arrears and dues. He can be removed by the council or by the state government. Normally the functions of the council are similar to those of the municipal corporations.

The notified area committee is set up in those areas which are not yet ready for declaring themselves as the municipalities. It is normally created in the areas which are rapidly growing with large and heavy industrialisation. The state government constitutes a committee called as Notified Area Committee. This committee

administers this area. Except three members who are elected, all the members are normally appointed by the state government. The chairman is also appointed by the state government.

Town area committee can be termed as the semi-municipal authority. They are constituted for the smaller towns. The town area committee is constituted by an act of state legislature and its composition and functions are specified in it. The committee may be partly nominated or partly elected or wholly elected or wholly nominated.

When, in an area, large public enterprises are set-up, several residential colonies also come into existence. For example, the steel plants of Rourkela, Bhilai, and Jamshedpur etc. consequently to administer such a township the municipal council or the corporations in which these areas fall appoint a Town Administrator, who is assisted by a few engineers and technicians. The townships are well planned and contain several facilities like water, electricity, roads, drainage etc. The expenditure on these services are shared by the industries concerned.

Cantonment Boards are the only bodies which are controlled by the Central government by the Defense Ministry. These are set-up when a military station is established in a new area. With the establishment of the cantonment area several civilian areas like shops and market and the inhabitants of these markets constitute a sizable population. The officer commanding the station is the president of the board. An elected member holds office for the period of three years, while the nominated members continue as long as they hold the office in that station.

Apart from the municipalities and corporations there are other single purpose agencies which are set-up as statutory bodies under separate acts of the respective state governments. The single purpose agencies are housing boards and improvement trusts. To deal with the problem of housing the housing boards are set-up in almost every state. At the central level, the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) plays a crucial role. It has promoted numerous houses in the country. Most

of them are for the members of the lower income groups people. The housing boards receive the funds from central and the state government for the promotion of different housing schemes. These boards generally analyse the problem of housing and they usually give advice to the government regarding the improvement of the housing problems. They also create the planned neighbourhood with the construction of the houses at reasonable cost. However, the housing boards are not exclusively for poor income groups rather they also plan for the housing of the higher income group, yet their most important contribution has been in serving the middle income groups. Besides, a number of well integrated colonies have been developed by the housing boards.

To promote the development of a city the improvement trusts are constituted. They are the statutory bodies. Normally, it is the new areas of a city which falls under the improvement trusts. The power and functions of the improvement trusts are specified in the act by which they are created. Hence there are inter-state variation in the composition and functioning of the improvement trusts. Generally, an improvement trust is headed by a chairman, who is a nominee of the state government. An improvement trust is a multi-functional development agency, which performs an important coordinative role by bringing the representatives of a large number of government agencies engaged in the process of development under one roof. An example of the improvement trust is Delhi Development Agency (DDA), which was set up in 1957.

25.6 Functions of the Municipalities

The List of Functions that has been laid down in the twelfth schedule is as follows:

- i) urban planning, including town planning
- ii) Regulation of land use and construction of buildings.
- iii) Planning for economic and social development.
- iv) Roads and bridges.
- v) Water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial purposes.
- vi) Public health, sanitation, conservancy and solid waste management.
- vii) Fire services.

- viii) Urban forestry, protection of the environment and promotion of ecological aspects.
- ix) Safeguarding the interests of weaker sections of society, including the handicapped and mentally retarded.
- x) Slum improvement and up gradation.
- xi) Urban poverty alleviation.
- xii) Provision of urban amenities and facilities such as parks, gardens and playgrounds.
- xiii) Promotion of cultural, educational and aesthetic aspects.
- xiv) Burial and burial grounds and electric crematoriums.
- xv) Cattle ponds, prevention of cruelty to animals.
- xvi) Vital statistics including registration of births and deaths.
- xvii) Public amenities, including street lighting, parking lots, bus stops and public conveniences.
- xviii) Regulation of slaughter houses and tanneries.

25.7 Metropolitan Planning Committee (MPC)

The Metropolitan Planning Committee came into existence with the introduction of the 74th constitutional amendment which provides that in every metropolitan area, a Metropolitan Planning Committee should be constituted for preparing a draft development plan for the metropolitan area as a whole. It also laid down that in this sort of committee not less than two third of its members shall be elected by and from amongst the elected members of the municipalities of that particular area. While preparing the draft development plan the following factors will be taken into account

- i) The plans will be prepared by the municipalities and the panchayats in the metropolitan area.
- ii) Matters of common interest between the two.
- iii) Sharing of water and other physical and natural resources.
- iv) Integrated development of infrastructure and environmental conservation.

- v) Overall objectives and priorities set-up by the government of India and the state government.
- vi) Other available resources, financial and otherwise.

However, despite a rapid growth of urban local bodies after the attainment of independence general impression is that the urban local bodies in India have failed to come up to the people's expectations. The importance of urban local bodies is very crucial in our democratic set-up. Local urban bodies form a substantial step towards centralization of power and promotion of democratic values. The local bodies are the instruments of cultural and social change in India. They are more effective instruments of social change because they inculcate the civic sense and the neighbourhood consciousness among the urbanites. Despite there has been an imbalance between the peoples aspirations and needs on the one hand and the actual conduct of the municipal administration on the other hand. The shortage of finances added to the gravity of the problem. Non utilization of available resources properly also made things worse. Rapid urbanization and the emergence of developmental tasks necessitated high degree of administrative and technical skills. There is a great need for larger financial devolution to urban authorities. The system of municipal finance suffers from serious flaws. The system of accounting, as prescribed by the state government is not followed strictly, leading to embezzlement, leakages and under assessment. In various municipalities, audit objections remain pending for many years and in some municipalities audit is not even conducted on a regular basis.

Due to excessive control over the urban local bodies, their performance suffers. To ensure proper performance of their functions, the state government exercise legislative, administrative, financial and judicial control. These controls, instead of providing guidance and support, the control turns out to be negative, restricting the functioning of these bodies. Apart from the control another reason for the failure of the urban local bodies is due to the postponement of the elections of the local bodies like municipalities etc. The state government feel it safer and easier to deal with bureaucracy placed at the helm of the civic administration than with the popularly

elected councilors and corporators. The shifting of the large rural masses to the urban areas for jobs led to several problems such as the unplanned growth of towns and cities. In the absence of the proper planning, judicious use of land is not being made, colonies are set-up without proper facilities such as schools, parks and hospitals, the growth of slums is not checked, there is shortage of houses, traffic congestion is rampant and hardly any effective steps are taken to check urban poverty and unemployment.

Due to the lack of awareness in public, public participation in urban bodies has been negligible. The population of the cities consists of heterogeneous groups and they are alienated from one another. Most of the city population was once rural and even now, it looks at the city merely as a place to earn a livelihood, and has little attachment with it. While one understands the reason behind the low participation of the rural population in the management of their politico-administrative institutions, it is difficult to appreciate a similar, if not identical, phenomenon in the urban areas. The urban leadership also fails to inspire any confidence among the people and once elected they hardly visit their wards to learn about the gravity of the problems of their constituency.

25.8 Suggestions for Improvement in the Functioning of Local Administration

In the decision making process the people participation is a must. Although the local bodies are democratic but most of the essential decisions are done by the bureaucrats and other government officials. The representation of people is a very essential ingredient for the developmental programme to be successful. Side by side the local administration should have the coordination between the municipal government and other public agencies for the successful implementation of the developmental plans and policies. The local administration should also have the political support to obtain funds and access to other resources required for the execution of urban development plans and programmes. The organizational performance must be efficient in the location of the programmes, the timing of activities, the impact of programmes on individual target groups on which projects are to be focussed and the use of resources

and requiring more effective programming in individual cases. The organizational structure should also provide for continuity in administration and have the capacity to overcome major political difficulties associated with the change in the government at the national level affecting inter-governmental relationships. It should be adaptable to shift in priorities and the unforeseeable events in the process of urban development. There is a need for making provisions in the system for monitoring and evaluation of progress and consistent improvements in performance.

The existing urban local government and the development legislation is not only inadequate in the faces of the enormity of task of urban development but far more narrow than the ranges of the legislations considered adequate for the implementation of our urban policy. The current urban legislation is grouped around the land use patterns, development control building codes and by laws, property taxation, environmental control and industrial location legislations. The existing institutional and juridical structures relating to the application of the legislation, requires improvement in administrative procedures, particularly in respect of delays in reviews, development permission, buildings codes and by - laws, land acquisition, land tenure, industrial location, permission for guiding urban development. Since the crux of the urban growth is the change in demographic, social and economic structures, the task of urban local bodies in the field of urban development is to cope with the emerging problems more efficiently with suitable development strategies and minimum of institutional organizational changes in the distribution of assets, including level of education, health and related services. These are prerequisites to bring about changes in the level of income and consumption, where urban poverty is compounded by shortage and scarcity and also by high cost of basic necessities including services. So we can say that the prospects for an effective representative local government are yet to be seen despite the fact that political process and urban development administration are closely related and generally for most of the time dominated by state/or national political system.

25.9 Emergence of the Voluntary Organisation

The problems of urban local government are varied in nature. Some of the urban problems like housing problems, infrastructural facilities, problem of safe drinking water, unemployment, poverty, rise in crime rate, social isolation, old age problems and the neglect of aged population in a city, beggary, individualism and low social cohesion and cooperation between the individuals are glaring. To solve these problems the need of voluntary organization arises. For some years, the voluntary organizations have emerged as an important option for the popular activities, in spite of their limited reach and impact of their programmes. The role of voluntary organization should represent a form of social and economic investment towards achieving equity, social justice and the full democratization of the society. In the context of the above problems in urban areas the role of Non Government Organisations is very crucial.

The voluntary organisations can sensitive the local populace about the existing problems in their respective cities and towns. They can form associations and other smaller groups. Normally the NGOs can act as the sources of various information through various processes to each components of the society. The process of making the people aware and sensitive of their rights and duties is essential for the suitability and transparency of any planning process. The voluntary organisations can impart training to the people of the locality for the solution of various problems which can be solved with the active participation of the people of the concerned locality. Training should provide groups the power to negotiate and formulate plans for their own localities, along with a common knowledge of its effects at a larger level. They can assists in playing an advocacy and pioneering role in the planning and information, education and service delivery or a complementary and supplementary role in policy and programmes.

As our society is getting more and more democratized and the administration is more and more decentralized, the role of voluntary organisations is increasing day by day. To achieve the role of development in this scenario, the voluntary organisations are

expanding their activities, strategic access and use of media and communication as more effective, along with negotiations. The voluntary organisations take a proactive role in implementation of various programmes of urban problem. They advocate with the state and other voluntary organisations to ensure that the commitments are transformed into reality. As an immediate follow-up the strategic plans should be translated into local language and documents disseminated widely to policy-makers, government and other NGOs, the media and the public. It is also essential that the voluntary organisations document the institutional learnings for the use of the interested groups.

The voluntary organizations take part in the new initiatives in the field of the development and other progresses in the field of civil society. They play an important role in this regard. Their role does not end with the creation of awareness among the people and capacity building in them but is redefined in order to pass on institutional learning both inter-group and intra-group, thus becoming a core of learning for newer groups. They advocate for the rights of the marginalized groups of society like poor sections of the lower castes and the handicapped section of the urban areas. They act as the consultant for these groups and they fight for the right cause of these marginalized groups of urban areas. They also complement the lack of technical know how of this section of the society by providing necessary support and explaining the different processes involved if any. They spread the documents on experiences and institutional learning nationally and even globally for easy replication elsewhere. These documents can be used to identify and overcome the problems and also as a base for dealing with governments.

Reflection and Action 25.2

Visit a local NGO in your neighbourhood. Find out about its activities and participation of people in them. Write a note of two pages on the “Native and Activities of an NGO” Compare your note with other students at your study center.

It is very important to develop mechanisms for consultation, negotiation, multilateral accords and coordination among various agents involved, within an institutional framework that respect integral policies, plans and programmes. If these practices are to be legitimized, the validity and representation of the spokespersons of popular organisations must be recognized and their dynamics should be respected. Institutions must be adapted and public servants educated so that they have an open mind to recognise the importance of processes present within the popular neighborhoods of our cities. Citizens and their groups are the stake holders in the urban areas.

Voluntary organisations have emerged as a force in the process of urban development. There is a need to build their own capacities as well as government capacity to perform the roles well and ultimately to learn in the process. The NGO also need to evolve and strengthen the emerging new partnership to make the enabling role of the government in the human settlement sectors a reality in the coming years. Thus the urban locality should be planned in such a way which cares for the marginalised and the vulnerable with compassion and respect for the rights for all. The voluntary organisations thus emerged to promote and encourage the political participation of all the people in the city and conducting its affairs in a transparent and accountable manner. They also emerged due to the social need of the people in an urbanised society.

25.8 Conclusion

The scope of the urban local government is very wide which includes the phenomena of urbanisation itself, urban planning, municipal legislation, personnel management, finances of the urban local bodies and other agencies. The urban local government operates in towns and cities. The chief characteristics of the urban local governments are: that its jurisdiction is limited to the specific area and its functions relate to the provision of civic amenities to the population living in that local areas, it has the power to raise finances by taxation in the areas under its jurisdiction and they act under the general supervision of the particular state and central governments. The urban local governments act as a school to teach democracy to the citizens of the

locality. In other words we can say that the local urban bodies act as the custodians of our democratic culture and ethos. It provides facilities for minimum basic needs of the people. The importance of the urban local government has increased considerably after the independence with the introduction of the notion of the welfare state in our Constitution. Similarly, the Non-government Organisations or NGOs have also emerged to fulfil the needs of the citizens. Through adversary and training the NGOs spread awareness of various kinds in society, in general and urban areas in specific.

25.9 Further Reading

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Unit 26

Urban Planning

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- 26.4 Main Concerns of Urban Planning
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Learning Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the nature and scope of urban planning
- describe the historical evolution of urban planning
- discuss the main concerns of urban planning and
- outline the main objectives of the National Urbanization Policy

26.1 Introduction

The phenomena of urban growth has resulted in an unplanned, haphazard and ugly urban settlements. Planning is therefore necessary to combat the menace of urbanisation and its resultant problems. An important function of planning in purely physical terms is the judicious use of land- a scarce commodity in most urban areas, and its rational and timely reservation for future use. Land planning is thus a very essential need. The state governments have therefore to legalise upon planning and to ensure its implementation which is ultimately the responsibility of the urban governments. The state governments have set-up departments of town and country planning for this purpose. In this unit you will learn all about the process of planning for a better future; especially in the urban areas.

26.2 Urban Planning: Nature and Scope

Planning is a preparation for future action. It is a conscious process of selecting and developing the best course of action to accomplish a definite objective. Urban planning is a process by which the use of land is controlled and its development is regulated in public interest. It involves both engineering and architectural problems. The urban planning is a technique and method of development that contribute to the organisation, development and evolution of urban areas. It contributes to their urbanizing environs, based on economic, legal and aesthetic concepts and conditions in order to promote the welfare of the public and the quality of the environment. It deals with the spatial incidence of socio-economic development over an urban space. As Lewis Mumford defines:

“City planning involves the consideration of human activities in time and space, on the basis of the known facts about place, work and people. It involves the modification and relocation of various elements of the total environment for the purpose of increasing their services to the community, and it calls for the building of appropriate structure, dwellings, industrial plants, markets, water works, dams, bridges, villages, cities to house the activities of a community, to assist the performance of all its needful functions in a timely and orderly fashion.”

Planning has both social and economic aims; socially successful planning tends to make people's life happier, facilitates social intercourse, and has visual attractiveness. A proper spatial relationship between the communities in a region and the constituent parts of a town, compactness of development and an efficient arrangement of communication routes-all results in human activities being carried out more efficiently and less wastefully and thus create wealth.

In a town or city there are large numbers of activities going on whether somebody directs them or not. Houses are constructed, shops are opened, markets flourish, schools and hospitals are built, and roads are widened or new roads opened. All these activities will go on whether we have town planning or not. If there is no planning what may happen is that before roads are built houses may be constructed and houses may be occupied before water supply and drainage facilities are provided. Urban planning and town planning

considers each one of these improvements and relates them to the community and the city as a whole, to see what is likely to happen not only in the immediate future but over a reasonably long period of time.

Actually the urban planning is concerned with the wide range of issues and problems such as the problem of providing the adequate housing facilities, employment, schools, parks and playgrounds, good transportation facilities and utilities and services for the increasing urban population in the large number of towns and cities which exists today and are likely to come up in the future. These problems require constant and continuous planning instead of piecemeal planning at different level.

The urban planning cannot be seen in isolation, rather the problem of urban planning is related with the entire region, and thus there is a need for a regional approach to urban planning. It is equally important to coordinate the growth of rural areas with the future development of towns and cities to form an integral part of a balanced region. Regional approach should attempt to reduce the socio-economic imbalance between the urban and the rural areas and between different parts of the country. This requires taking up of regional development plans along with the preparation of the master plans for towns and cities. Regional and urban planning therefore is closely related with each other. Regional planning basically deals with the physical planning of towns and cities and the countryside. It may be used with reference to an extension of town planning. It may include the general planning of resources.

Patrick Geddes and Lewis Mumford have written about regional planning and development as a prerequisite to any social planning or town planning. The term region applies to an area with certain characteristics, often mere size, by virtue of which it is adopted as a suitable unit for some particular purpose of business and administration. It is also an area which is homogenous with respect to some particular set of associated conditions, whether of the land or of the people such as industry, farming, distribution of population, commerce or the general sphere of influence of a city. A region in general

terms is envisaged as a natural unit in contrast to the artificial unit created for administrative purposes.

A town planner should be an expert in the area of land use planning. He should utilise the minimum extent of land required for expansion of towns and thus preserve valuable land for some other purposes. Here again, a regional study would help the planner regarding his limitations in planning for the development of any town or city in the region. The present day town planner, faced with the problem of expanding our cities for locating additional houses, industries, public buildings and recreational facilities, is at the same time facing problems like shortage of farm land, ill effects of deforestations, ribbon development along highways, imbalance in rural and urban life and so on. He has to approach the problem at the regional basis before going to the expansion of any existing town or city, or building any town in that particular region. Urban planning thus is a very broad concept and includes not only planning of streets, houses and a few civic buildings but if town planning to be effective and creative, has to start from the village and cover the entire country. At the city level the town planner seeks to serve the interest of not only one community or one town but several communities, individually as well as in relation to one another, and utilises the resources of the city to the best advantage of land optimum utilisation by all the communities of that area.

Urban planning takes place within a national framework. Planning gains its power through its embodiment in the legislation and regulations which forms part of the legal apparatus which can vary from country to country. Secondly, the implementation of planning occurs through the administrative system which again varies considerably across different different countries of the world. Urban planning should be not only politically and socio-culturally feasible but it should be environmentally, economically, technologically, physically, fiscally and infrastructure-wise also feasible. Since the city and its environs cannot grow as fast as the growth of the urban population and human activity, urban planning is a must. Congestion and overcrowding of homes, the poverty and unemployment, the high incidence of deviant social behaviour, the growth of sub-

standard settlements and squatter colonies, the shortage of housing, lack of community facilities and public utilities are some of the symptoms of faulty planning in urban areas.

26.3 Historical Evolution of Urban Planning

Human beings have been living on this earth for more than a million years but we trace the history of the cities only since the 5000 or 6000 years ago in the great river valleys of Euphrates, the Indus and the Nile. From the historical facts it is a well known truth that the cities were always planned with a definite purpose in mind. It may be due to self glorification, protection, trade etc, and the development of the city was always done as a separate agency.

In ancient India particularly during the Mauryas and Gupta periods separate urban planning and development agencies existed. The work of urban planning was performed by city council and town council along with the other functions of the state. The city council was modelled upon that of a village panchayat and it may be assumed that it was an elected body, though certain works were reserved for the control of the imperial officers. During the Gupta period, we have found evidence of the existence of town councils and the public was also very vigilant about proper development of the city.

There are quite a number of books written by the ancient authors about town planning in India. They are known as '*Vastu Sastra*.' Earliest examples of Vedic town planning available are Madurai, Srirangam and Kanchipuram, build with the temple as the focal point and concentric square streets all around at some length. One who refers to Manasara Silpa Sastra (Architecture by Manasara) and Kautilya Artha Shastra (Economics by Kautilya) can appreciate the scientific approach to town and village planning in ancient India.

Manasara Shilpa Shastra is a treatise on town planning and architecture and consists of seventy-five *adhyayas* or chapters. Apart from dealing with details of Vastu-shilpa, many of the chapters describe particulars such as design of various parts of the buildings, towers, pillars, chariots triumphal arches, jewellery, idols of gods and ceremonies connected with the commissioning of the finished structures.

The fourth chapter describes the investigation of the nature of different types of soils by means of several tastes, such as their colour, form, smell, and touch. The seventh chapter deals with the planning of the village according to their suitability for the location of temples, palaces, houses, roads and other depending upon the location of the presiding deity within the village. The ninth chapter describes in detail the different types of village plans according to their parts of the village for temples, schools, public halls and residential houses for different classes of people. The eleventh chapter deals with the formation of the cities, town and fortresses. The characteristics of the cities fit for the habitation of kings, merchants, Brahmins and other classes of people. The following are the different types of town plans evolved and practised according to Manasara.

1. Dandaka
2. Sarvathobhadra
3. Nandyavarta
4. Padmaka
5. Swastika
6. Prastara
7. Karmuka
8. Chaturmukha

Dandaka type of town plan provides for two main entrance gates and is generally adopted for the formation of small towns and villages. The village offices were generally located in the east. The female deity of the village or the *Gandevata* will generally be located outside the village and the male deities in the northern portion. In the second type of town plan the whole town should be fully occupied by houses of various descriptions and inhabited by all classes of people. The temple dominates the village. In the third type of town planning i.e. *Nandyavarta* the planning was meant for the construction of towns and not for the villages. It is generally adopted for the sites either circular or square in shape, with not less than thousand houses but not more than four thousand. The streets run parallel to the central adjoining streets with the temple of the presiding deity in the centre of the town. *Nandyavarta* is the name of a flower.

Padmaka type of plan was practised for building of the towns with fortress all round. The pattern of the plan resembles the petals of lotus radiating outwards from the centre. The city used to be practically an island surrounded by water, having no scope for expansion. Swastika type of plan contemplates some diagonal streets dividing the site into certain triangular plots. The site need not be marked out into a square or rectangle and it may be of any shape. The town is surrounded by a rampart wall, with most of its foot filled with water. Two main streets cross each other at the centre, running south to north and west to east. The characteristic feature of Prastara plan is that the site may be either square or rectangular but not triangular or circular. The sites are set apart for the poor, the middle class, the rich and the very rich. The size of the sites increases according to the capacity of each to purchase or build upon. The main roads are much wider compared to those of other patterns. The town may or may not be surrounded by a fort.

Karmuka plan is suitable for the place where the sites of the town is in the form of a bow or semi-circular or parabolic and mostly applied for towns located on the sea shore or the river banks. The main streets of the town runs from north to south or east to west and cross streets run at right angles to them, dividing the whole area into blocks. The presiding deity, commonly a female deity, is installed in the temple built, in any convenient place.

Chaturmukha type of plan is applicable to all towns starting from the largest towns to the smallest village. The site may be either square or rectangular having four faces. The town is laid out east to west lengthwise, with four main streets. The temple of the presiding deity will be always at the centre of the town.

The urban planning during the Moughal period flourished in leaps and bounds. Many cities like Fatehpur Sikri, Ajmer, Ujjain, Bharatpur, Benaras, Delhi, Agra etc. clearly bears the influence of Muslim architecture and culture. However, as you know, Ujjain is a city of Ancient India dating back to the 6th century B.C. It also evident from the history that a separate department existed for the construction and development works. This

department was headed by the emperor himself, but it had many eminent architects, engineers and ministers as its members. In the regime of Akbar, a public works department was established for the planning and development of construction work. All the Muslim rulers had a separate department of urban planning and development. Like Romans the Moughals too wanted to show their power and pomp by constructing monumental structures for the use of the royal families at the cost of other citizens. The city of Jaipur built by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II during 1720s is one of the best examples of the revival of the Vedic principles of settlement planning on a grid pattern with strict architectural and land use controls on the main streets, residential areas planned with spatial hierarchy of chowks (public squares) being an interjection of main roads through a gateway leading to the main markets of the city.

During the British phase the main emphasis of urban planning was based on their strategic linkages to port towns for the purposes of trade and commerce including defence. Besides these other economic and climatic factors were also taken into account. The evolution of urban planning techniques and solutions initiated at the beginning of the 20th century to tackle the problems of urbanisation, were aimed towards town improvement. Functionally they did not visualize the problem of urban planning beyond the municipal approach to development. In modern India the first urban improvement authority was constituted as far back as 175 years ago in Calcutta under the statute of 1794 with only limited powers. In the light of the experiences of the working of this improvement authority, in 1803 a town improvement committee consisting of 30 nominated leading citizens of Calcutta was constituted. In 1857, this committee was reorganized in the form of a board. This board had 7 commissioners, 3 nominated by the government and 4 selected by the tax payers. In 1864, on the example of Calcutta, and on the advice and insistence of the Royal sanitary commission, the sanitary commissions were set up in Bombay and Madras presidencies to give advice and assistance in all matters relating to public health, sanitation etc.

In the year of 1915, the famous town planner and administrator visited Madras presidency and he advised the government of India on this front. As a consequence, Bombay and Madras states enacted Town Planning acts on the line of the British Housing

and Town planning Acts, 1909 and Mr. H. V. Lanchester was appointed as town planning advisor to the imperial government of India. Although a large number of town planning acts were enacted in different parts of the country since then, the progress made under these enactments were very tardy.

Reflection and Action 26.1

Study the plan of your city/town/village. Prepare a map of all the basic organizations and official buildings related with planning and development of infrastructure of that area.

Compare your map of facilities with those of others at your study center.

After the independence a fresh impetus on the front of urban planning and development took place. The model act prepared by the Town and Country planning organization got the approval of the minister of the local self government in charge of town planning in 1962. The model act has been supplemented further by two legislations providing for the:

- i) land acquisition for development and planning
- ii) For the creation of development authorities to undertake large scale development of the city and the works relating to the provisions of the life-support system of amenities and services for a more humane urban environment.

The town planning legislations in the stream of directional planning made the provisions for the preparation of the master plans for cities in terms of physical development of urban space for the provisions of infrastructural services. These legislations did not anticipate planning for supra-urban space extending the boundaries of the city to the peripheral areas and their elevation to the regional constellation of the city and its sub-systems.

The existing urban planning legislation in force in India suffers from many deficiencies. A study undertaken by Balachandran and R.N.Haldipur on this subject indicates the following shortcomings:

- i) multiplicity of legal and juridical structures and organisations exist without establishing proper linkages among them,

- ii) overlapping of functions and jurisdictions in the absence of suitable provisions for the coordination of their activities,
- iii) emphasis on plan preparation and not implementation and execution,
- iv) inadequacy of effective land acquisition provisions under the Land Acquisition act of 1894 which has become outdated,
- v) legal inadequacy for checking haphazard development, peripheral growth and ribbon development control,
- vi) lack of provisions for organizational set-up for plan implementation and ,
- vii) lack of public participation in real sense of their involvement.

26.4 Main Concerns of Urban Planning

Some of the main concerns of urban planning are:

- i) to rationalise the distribution of goods and services including economic activities compatible with population redistribution which functions both as an agent of production as well as consumption to minimise the friction of space.
- ii) To improve the level of living and condition of human environment in view of the low level of per-capita income.
- iii) To absorb urban labour supply with increased income of the urban poor in the wake of stagnant economy suffering from unemployment/underemployment.
- iv) The issues of what are the sizes of the towns and cities which would be most advantageous from economic and social viewpoint.
- v) What should be the ratio of rural to urban population to release the pressure on rural land and maintain economic and social balance over the space?
- vi) To suggest the most rational pattern of land use for economic base of the city.
- vii) To achieve an optimum and functionally integrated spatial structure of human settlement pattern to realise the overall goal of the society.

The national plans since their first inception i.e. the first plan (1951-56) laid emphasis on rehabilitation of refugees by augmenting the stock of housing supply and linking housing problems on the sound footings of town and country planning. In the second plan (1956-61) although the task of rehabilitation was considered merely as a problem in itself, but as a part of a wider spectrum of planning of urban areas and the regions

of their location. The second plan recommended that the following three problems should be studied:

- i) Methods of securing planned development in urban areas.
- ii) Expansion of housing facilities.
- iii) Development of civic administration.

The third plan (1961-66) specifically provided for undertaking the preparation of 72 master plans for practically all the major cities, and their surrounding areas including industrial areas and also some of the rapidly growing regions. The central government in this plan period suggested minimum directions for action which were as follows:

- i) Control of urban land values through public acquisition of land and appropriate fiscal policies.
- ii) Physical planning of the use of land.
- iii) Defining tolerable minimum and maximum standard for housing and other services.
- iv) Strengthening of municipal administration for undertaking the development responsibilities.

The fourth plan gave more emphasis to the need for a national urban land policy. It laid emphasis on the following points:

- i) Urban water supply and the sanitation.
- ii) Land acquisition and development.
- iii) Preparation of master plans for the selected towns and regions.

The fifth plan (1974-79) gave the slogan of removal of poverty and on the attainment of self reliance. The following were the major points of urban planning and urban development in this plan.

- i) To augment civic services in urban centres as far as possible and to make them fit for a reasonable level of living.
- ii) To make efforts to tackle the problems of metropolitan cities on a more comprehensive and regional basis.
- iii) To promote the development of smaller towns and new urban centres to ease the pressure of increasing urbanisation.

- iv) To assist in the implementation of projects of national importance such as those related to metropolitan cities or inter-state projects.
- v) To provide necessary support for the enlargement of the scope and functions of the industrial townships undertaken by the central government undertakings so as to make them self-contained.

The draft sixth five year plan (1978-83) gave more emphasis on the infrastructural problems and the plight of the urban poor in the urban areas. The document also recognizes the problem of water and air pollution and the serious threats being imposed by urban dairy to the degradation of human environment.

The new urban planning policy aims at three major objectives:

- i) Revising the growth pattern so that the smallest towns grow fastest, and the largest ones either grow at the slowest or at a slow pace.
- ii) Decongesting the overpopulated areas of large cities so as to create a more balanced and rational relationship between residential and work place like shops, schools etc.
- iii) To see that small and medium towns and new cities develop in a way that the problems of the past are not repeated.

But all these enactments were in the nature of the directional planning aimed at preparing improvement schemes for specific areas. The improvement trusts besides preparing and implementing individual schemes of city improvement or its expansions incorporated the provision of land acquisition and its development and disposal. Although their functions were limited compared to municipal authorities, their jurisdiction was not confined to municipal boundaries alone but was extended to include the peripheral areas also without any comprehensive development plan or perspective of growth and its extension to the regional context. Most of the town planning activities were performed by the improvement trusts but some of the trusts faced difficulties due to their merger either with the corporations or with the newly created authorities like development boards or development authorities.

Gradually with the emergence of new developmental agencies like housing boards, cooperative housing societies, the functioning of improvement trusts was discouraged. Moreover the similarity of functions of both the Development Boards/Authorities and the improvement trusts also created conflict between the two, as the latter took the schemes of more remunerative nature, such as, the development of new areas but neglecting the improvement and redevelopment of older areas of the city. The unplanned consequence of such an urban growth of slums and squatters, misuse of land, and mushrooming colonies in the periphery of the city adding to more burden to the maintenance cost of municipal administration.

In an urbanising society, the urbanisation of people is meaningless without urbanisation of space. The lack of urbanisation policy under the plans and its comprehension by the master plan bears no relation to the social and economic development plan. Under the traditional approach of urban planning there was the concept of master plan. Since the master plans are basically land use plans, their subject and object of interest being the development and use of the space. They are mainly concerned with the programming of intra-urban space. The gradual emergence of this technique of master planning as a control over land use of cities to ensure adequate standard of housing and its transition from housing to neighborhood, to city and its further prolongation to region is not adequately represented by the traditional approach of master planning which is restricted to land use planning alone. The master plans developed to comprehend the process of urbanisation have generally failed to take account of quick changes in population and its related social and economic trends. They are neither comprehensive nor rigid frameworks for the execution of works but signify only broad outlines of a future development plan. As a spectrum of various coordinated land use patterns, master plan is generally undertaken when the actual development has proceeded much ahead of the operational planning. The master plans approach to development as they exist today is designed to accentuate the tide of urbanisation rather than comprehending the social and economic forces of urbanisation.

26.5 New Approach to Urban Planning

The traditional approaches to master plans have many limitations which can be overcome and can be geared for development only if

- i) its scope is wider than the city region.
- ii) the elaboration of master plans for land use is to be effected within the context of regional development plan
- iii) its focus is on policy statements rather than on mapped relationships in terms of a full scale urban and regional development policy.
- iv) its process provides for different mixes of regulations (local, regional and national) and public investments in areas at different stages of urbanisation.
- v) its operational content is a changing sequence of different sectors over functional and geographical units of space.
- vi) its coverage is wider enough to comprehend the development sequences of a system of geographical and spatial units (of villages, of towns, of cities, of regions, and of the nation as a whole).

26.6 Main Objectives of the National Urbanisation Policy

To promote the welfare of the society in general and of urban areas in particular, there is a dire need of designing a national urbanisation policy to serve as a guide for making specific decisions affecting the pattern of urban growth. An urban policy demands enactment of an Act by parliament on national urbanisation policy and planning Act for a more comprehension of social and economic forces for a wider spread of the benefits of urbanisation over the space, which should have among others the following objectives:

- i) Convergence of inter-regional income and growth differentials i.e. controlling city growth in rich regions and expanding urban centres in lagging ones;
- ii) Achieving national economic growth which has its implications in terms of structure and spacing of a hierarchy as a whole to the importance of leading cities as generic forces of economic growth and diffusion of innovation;

- iii) Gradual elimination of differential in life style in terms of productivity and welfare both in urban and rural areas providing the minimum levels of services for improving the quality of life.
- iv) Favour a pattern of urbanisation and economic development which offers wide range of alternative locations and encourages a balanced use of natural and human resources.
- v) Equating the private and social cost of urban development since divergence between social and private costs leads to excessive growth of cities.

Reflection and Action 26.2

Visit your local library and read a book on urban planning in India. Write an essay on “Urban Planning in India” in about two pages on the basis of the account given in your book.

Discuss your essay with other learners at your study center and your Academic counselor.

26.7 Conclusion

The increasing growth pressure on the cities and towns and lots of problems out of it poses new challenges to the urban planners and administrators in present time. Urban planning should be politically and socio-culturally acceptable as well as environmentally, economically, technologically, physically, fiscally and infrastructure-wise feasible. The increasing pressure of population growth on urban land, its use and reuse, the amenities and services and the large number of low income groups in urban areas are some of the important factors contributing to the problems of the urban health hazards, law and order cannot be managed within traditional role performance of the government. For this the role of the urban community is of utmost importance. The entire urban community should take part in urban planning. In other words the planning system should be as democratic as possible in the present time. The basic weaknesses in the urban planning has been that it did not foresee the problems of the informal sector growth within the urban economy, and the locational focus did not spell out the implications of the sectoral

programmes in relation to population distribution catering to the needs of both urban and rural settlements.

26.8 Further Reading

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Unit 27

Media and Urban Governance

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- 27.1 Introduction
- 27.2 Media Governance Interface
- 27.3 Media in Contemporary Urban Governance
- 27.4 Nature of Mass Media
- 27.5 Roles and Responsibility of Media
- 27.6 Conclusion
- 27.7 Further Reading

Learning Objectives

A careful study of this unit will enable you to

- describe the interface between media and governance
- explain the media in contemporary urban governance
- discuss the nature of mass media
- analyze the roles and responsibility of media, and
- the proactive concerns of media

27.1 Introduction

This paper attempts to address the issue of urban governance and more specifically, the role of mass media in promoting good governance in the urban areas. It examines the interface between media and governance and the role it plays in contemporary urban governance.

In the recent years, urban areas, specially, the cities are enhancing their standard to compete in the global markets to attract investments to be a part of global economy (Friedman 1993). Although, on the one hand cities in India attempt to join any other global city of the world, on the other it does not address the growing inequality and polarization within social groups and classes in the city. One of the resultant changes in the transformation is the organization of labour process and a shift from manufacturing economy to service economy. While a detailed analysis of the impact of services on the income structure in the urban area is much in the offing, however, some of the studies undertaken in other parts of the world (Sassen,Saskia,2000), show

that the service industries have a significant effect on the growth of unemployment, paying below poverty level wages and so on. This results in a tendency towards increased economic polarization that affect the use of land, organization of labour markets, housing, and consumption structure. What it refers to, is an economy which is undergoing transition whereby growth contributes to inequality among the existing groups in the city. Indeed, today there is a growing disparity, social inequality and poverty in the urban areas. It is equally alarming that inspite of growing poverty and inequality at the urban centers, the growth of urban population in India is less likely to recede. What is peculiar is the growth of the urban population at the cost of urban centers and decline of service provisions to attend the new migrants in the city. Although, urban India contributes to 70% of GDP, at the same time it faces enormous challenges. Most cities are lacking basic infrastructure, urban utility services and governance mechanism. The urban poor lack today adequate housing and social infrastructure, access to clean, regular supply of water, adequate sanitation facilities, comprehensive solid and liquid waste management systems, problems faced by slum settlements. Iniquitous distribution of resources and lack of access to basic services to socially and economically disadvantaged groups and finally, lack of information regarding citizen's needs and grievances.

Rarely, Mass Media helps in bringing to attention the plight of the poor to the larger society or to the governments of the day. Today Urban poor has landed up in a no entry zone where the privileges of past welfare policies are withdrawn and suddenly they are faced post welfare economy without any support to fall back upon. This is also a move from government to Governance where by other stakeholders are being asked to come to the rescue of the Urban poor. Today, the urban centers are becoming more diverse at the same time they are becoming more connected. Media reach once bounded by the city are more segmented by taste, identity, and ideology, and more geographically unbounded. Media serves as the connective tissue between the urban poor and the government, but changes in the media system have threatened the bonds between media, people, and governments. These changes include consolidated ownership, looser definition of public service obligations for broadcasters, and a variety of Internet-related changes in the way both the people and governments function. The new media prompt people to explore the potential for revitalization of governance structures. Amidst these social transformations, the media – new and old, big and small – are both part of the process and

interpreters of the process. But for a better urban governance, there is a need of developing a complex mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups can articulate their interests, mediate their differences, and exercise their legal rights and obligations. Governance includes the state, but transcends it by taking in the private sector and civil society. The state creates a conducive political and legal environment. The private sector generates jobs and income opportunities and the civil society facilitates political and social interaction – mobilizing urban marginal groups to participate in economic, social and political activities. The present unit focuses on these issues and exemplifies the role of mass media in the process of urban governance.

27.2 Media-Governance Interface

The relationship between mass media and society are inextricably interlinked. Mass media helps in empowering people as well as creating awareness regarding age old oppression, rights of the citizenry and the need for freedom of speech and expression. Freedom of expression and association are both the cause and effect of institution building for a better governance. These freedoms are crucial to human creativity and dignity. Social groups cannot organise or act to achieve any group interest unless they can communicate properly and overcome the difficulties of collective action. But Mass media may not be effective if the information is unevenly distributed in society. For instance, if media infrastructures are not uniformly distributed among class, caste, gender, religion and region than it would affect and constrain the ability of the media to penetrate and inform the people uniformly in society. As a result, it might weaken the notion of citizenship and make them ill informed about their rights. Thus, Mass Media have an important role to play in generating both trust and distrust of citizens upon governing institutions. Mass Media also plays an important role in creating civic education regarding human rights, election campaigns, voters education, election monitoring, observing code of conduct, exposing corrupt politicians, bureaucrats and business persons and educating the people. It can also expose nepotism, corruption at high offices, citizens' grievances and highlight the role of the government's opponents to erode public trust on governance. Sensational and negative reporting might increase the sale of news papers and increase readership in the short-run but it weakens their credibility in promoting social cohesiveness and cooperation in the long run. Partisan media have often encouraged a cynical corrosion of trust

of people in the governance process and induced a generalised distrust on political leaders, civil servants and other institutions of the state. They do not manufacture public opinion. They generate a 'crisis of trust' between the government and the people and disable the regulatory institutions in combating social fragmentation and violent conflicts.

There is a need to create a democratic public and influence the public institutions to be responsive to people. Sustained deliberation is essential to make those in power stick to responsible and legitimate action in their public life. The media often monitors political authority and style because it is on this basis that the multi actors of governance- the state, the market, the civil society and the international regime, conduct public affairs. Governance in essence is the process of steering, coordinating and communicating human efforts towards the attainment of certain goals (Deutsch, 1963:124) such as security, rule of law, identity and channels of participation and social welfare (Zurn, 1999:5-6). Media effectiveness is, therefore, essential to democratic governance, a form of governance that is concerned with making, applying and monitoring day to day progress. Governance also presupposes a partnership of institutions and processes, this partnership empowers the marginals to pool information, knowledge and capacities to develop shared policies and practices on issues of public concern. Mass media can play an important role in guiding and affecting the conduct of governance actors by shaping a sense of shared experience and political community. They are linked to the systems of society and situations under which a society operates. Without effective channels of communication among the members of a community, no system of governance can exist.

Mass media can help sustain human relationships- dialogue, engagement and compromise and reveal the mutuality of interests in governance matters. Media helps governance by structuring institutional relations of the society and by shaping the choices of people in public policy. Governance is epitomized by predictable, open and enlightened policy making; a bureaucracy imbued with a professional ethos; an executive arm of government accountable for its actions; a strong civil society participating in public affairs; and all behaving under the rule of law (World Bank, 1994). The interface of media and governance can be captured by a number of variables such as the level of freedom of expression and organization, freedom from discrimination, freedom from want and fear, opportunity for consultation and involvement in public policy, transparency and accountability guarantees, etc. enforcing and monitoring the rules of the political game.

Mass Media can help citizens by raising their voice and participation in its institutions and encouraging to press their demands publicly within the framework of the law and the constitution. It can equally help in identifying public service ineffectiveness or abuses of executive power or malfeasance on the part of ministers or civil servants, and thus directly contribute towards a higher level of public accountability of the executive branch of government" (Watson, 1999: 4). Imperfections of information in the public sector create disparities between the "actions of those governing and those that they are supposed to serve" (Stiglitz, 1999: 6) and create incentives for secrecy. However, sometimes close relationship with power and the media fall prey to its designs rather than be a part in shaping those designs for public good. Hence, the worldview of most of the media is often biased, false and very ideologically filtered discouraging the growth of collective action among the different castes, classes, gender and regions.

If mass media policies are constantly shaped by the corporate and Industrial houses, then they generate what Karl Marx calls a "false consciousness", confusing people about their own interests and those of the magnates. To both Karl Marx and Karl Mannheim, ideology is the symbolical expression of economic interests, the fusion of class and politics (Bell, 1990:41). The instrumental reasons springing from the logic of commercial advertising leads people towards their de-politicisation where people as consumers are influenced more by techniques of the media and the consumer culture it fosters. In countries where the levers of power are in the hands of a state bureaucracy, the monopolistic control over the media, often supplemented by official censorship, makes it clear that the media serve the ends of a dominant elite." transcend the ideological underpinnings of their position and reconcile the fragmentation of separate constituencies and belief systems and still inform the public adequately of what is good and what is bad in public and private lives? This requires courageous and successful intervention on the part of the public and the liberation of journalists from the shackles of the system.

Overt and covert influence of private economic and corporate power on the media, concealed from public accountability, does not help keep a constitutional democratic government amply just and clean. Traditional bureaucratic governance cannot keep pace with the fast changing modern society, which is moving with the speed of the digital revolution and e-commerce. New governance patterns require speedy decision-making, de-bureaucratisation, flexible

organisational formats and complex management capabilities. Effectiveness of media and communications is paramount to sustain these processes.

If journalists, like economists and lawyers, reflect the institutional biases of their employer, they weaken the power of the public. In the globalized context, sovereignty in the domain of government decision-making and action has been related to territorial and constitutional dimensions. Governance decision-making has become de-territorialized and complex, trespassing also the boundary of the Constitutional state. As internal power is fragmented, the government is compelled to pursue policies through negotiations on shared interests. This means that the government does not have monopoly over decision-making, conflict resolution, communication and collective action. However, It has to share the ‘space’ with the market, the civil society and the international regime. Each actor produces its own system of knowledge, institutions and communication, own theory of symbolization and symbolic representation and seeks its own ideal form of society asserting its own validity claims on the representation of truth.

Reflection and Action 27.1

Read a news item related with any major issue which has been reported in the Newspapers of the day. Read and critically analyse the way the same news item has been reported in at least three Newspapers.

Do you perceive any bias or tilt towards any ideology in all of them or one of them? Write a report on “Newspaper Reporting and Ideological Bias” in about two pages. Discuss the topic with others in your family or students at your study center.

27.3 Media in Contemporary Urban Governance

In the present Indian context, media plays an important role in the exertion of power and distribution of values. Media affects the overall quality of public life and also shapes people’s engagement in the specific policy decisions in the Indian democracy. To make greater impact within the broad socio-political context, media needs to create a ‘space’ to effectively carry out its functions. In Urban India, communication and information flows are highly concentrated.

Today, Indian cities look like a 'wired society' or a 'network society' but this does not ensure a proportional representation among its inhabitants. It follows a logic of 'pay per society' where by receiving of media messages are measured by minutes and hours and affordability by its consumer. The face of Indian media has been fast changing with the growth of the Internet, the phenomenal rise of satellite and cable networks, the continuing growth of language press, despite various challenges and the blurring of lines between news and entertainment. There is a sort of 'crisis' in the present media due to processes of commercialization and commodification. Who so ever can afford to procure the media acquisitions can have access to media and the messages. Although these media provide the occasion to link vertically across the world, horizontally, they do not ensure communications among groups, communities and gender. However, it helps in reinstating existing power constellations and the extent of their influence. Such a system limits the proportional distribution of information, making it inaccessible to a large section of the society. In other words, the existing gaps between the information haves and have-nots are widened with new additions like the digital divide.

One may loosely distinguish three types of media in India governed by their own doctrinal system. One group, mainly officially owned and beneficiary of government patronage, is conformist which blindly endorses the policies and activities of the political circuit of the system constituted by the party-parliament- government axis. This group is directly related to the systems of power and authority and represents the interests and ideology of the incumbent political class. Due to over control of the government and risk-averse tendencies of journalists in objective reporting, reviewing and analysing of news and views, they are less concerned with the restructuring of life-worlds. The second group, that one can call reformist, is privately owned and shares the fundamental values of the democratic system but puts critical eyes and ears on the policies and activities of the government and, therefore, seeks moderate reviews and reforms in the style of governance. This group is a powerful defender of modernity and rationality for interpreting and reforming the conditions of public life in India. The third category is radical which advocates fundamental change in the basic rules and styles of governance. At the same time, the radical group is also concerned about developing new forms of knowledge. Each group has its own constituency, shapes its own motives and tries to attract people to its products. The preferred role for journalists would be not to form what Michael

Foucault calls an "ideological chorus line" but serve as "interlocutors in a discussion about how to govern" (Gordon, 1991:7). Nothing could be more apt in describing the Indian Media.

27.4 Nature of Mass Media

Media in India are tightly compartmentalised into divergent interest groups, which displease one another in the process of "manufacturing consent," thereby intending to reduce the scope of human freedom and critical thinking. The main challenge before the Indian media is how to overcome the contradictions paralysing them and satisfactorily resolve a collective action situation? This is the reason why despite the age of information revolution the majority of Indian people are terribly ill-informed. The media are powerful means for state authorities, political parties and leaders to exhort the citizens to actively support their policies. These policies are derived from a set of political beliefs, strong ideas and certain doctrinal systems called ideologies. India has generally a free press, with its publications in circulation in every urban node where modern amenities are available. They reflect every political point of view and determine which events are newsworthy on a left-center-right horizontal ideological sphere, rather than on a vertical future-past dividing line.

Most of the media in India are privately owned but they do not operate independent of government rules and regulations on content, ownership and techno- infrastructure policies. It is only through media freedom that various viewpoints can be articulated in the realm of opinion formation and judgment. This is how people are informed and are enabled to participate in the democratic process. A sound democratic process achieves greater common good for the present and the next generation. As interest groups and political parties dominate the media in India, their political culture is accordingly fragmented. This fragmentation arises from the varied socialisation experiences of the various groups and sub-groups and which result into a one-sided and biased fixation on the primacy of their own interests. "The control over the media of communication by political parties and interest groups means that the audience for political communication is fragmented" (Almond, 1971:46) producing often disharmonious modes of political socialisation and fragmented action. Empowerment of the people produces media visibility while marginality produces their invisibility in policy attention.

As the media in India have become concentrated in the hands of a few powerful interest groups in key urban areas, their contributions in freeing the political society and providing equal opportunity to all is minimal. As a result, it has widened the knowledge divide between the core and the periphery and the rich and the poor even further. In no way do the media constitute a vibrant ‘public sphere’ in Urban India. The relationship between media and governance is fraught with tensions and meaningful possibilities. It cannot be denied that both media and governance in India suffer from serious problems, which at times even feed into each other. Suspension of civil liberties, excessive militarization, communal assertions, and homogenizing tendencies have too often spelled doom for Indian democracy. In this context it is imperative that media becomes more sensitive on issues of democratic governance, people’s struggles against social injustice and inequality and so on. Its commitment towards democratic norms and values in its own governance system, structure and function is a must. Further, the role of people’s organizations, social movements, voluntary organizations and other civil society formations in monitoring the functioning of media and making it more people centred is another critical issue. The role of civil society organization is important especially in the light of the fact that autonomous organizations within media like those of journalists and workers, have not only become weak but they also severely lack in their ability to raise critical issues pertaining to media governance and its functioning.

Reflection and Action 27.2

What do you think about the role of Indian media in the context of governance? Write your opinion in about five pages and discuss the topic with your Academic Counsellor, learners at your study center or any friend of yours who is aware about the problem.

On the other hand, state control over television and radio, the role of multinationals and big corporate houses and bourgeois monopoly over print media has meant that media has often remained inaccessible to the vast majority of the urban poor and the marginalized. Overwhelming commercial interests and monopolies of a few affluent individuals and business houses are not good for democracy. The media, under monopoly conditions, does not provide a wide range of interpretive frameworks that are important for the well being of democracies. The carving up of media markets inter-nationally as well as nationally by mega, transnational

corporations has led to a catastrophic effect on the diversity of opinion, the nature of access and participation in the media spectrum and people's right to communicate. Real access to and participation in media appears to be for the few and not for the many. Simultaneously, the state has time and again tried to curb the voice of the media, to prosecute and harass those who have come out openly against repressive practices.

Over the years the corporate sector has developed its own press and channels. The political parties have their own newspapers. The voluntary organizations, groups engaged in movements, associations of the oppressed castes and the citizens engaged in promoting alternative politics have grown in terms of its sheer number and the area of operation. However they have not been able to develop their own press or television channels with a mass reach and sound credentials. It may be noted that different civil society formations have developed and are running their own medium of communications, like small magazines or newsletters. But these do not have an impact on a macro level and have not been able to develop a professional form. The challenge to develop a Community Radio and Community Television or at least a magazine is before all those who are engaged in various ways to promote and support alternative movements, alternative social groups and alternative models of development.

Therefore, a major challenge for Urban India is the enlargement of internal institutional structures of the media reflecting the broader society to be able to defend the interests of the politically weak population. A media community that does not acknowledge a larger responsibility to society is less likely to engage in self-correction, in terms of how it educates the public and what opportunities it offers to them for the future. But good Urban governance requires an effective media to promote participation and concern regarding public goods. Only those media pursuing the public interest can play their roles effectively. "The modern economics of information emphasises that once knowledge is made public, it becomes a public good that cannot be made private again" (Stiglitz,1999:4). Without a free flow of information, socialising interactions and collective action cannot be effective. Information flow has a positive correlation between communication and awareness of people about their political knowledge and between learning and involvement in problem solving.

27.5 Roles and Responsibilities of Media

If we want to define various developments in the particular context of governance, and governance that means something for a majority of the poor, the struggling people, then we must first realize that the media, in all its varied forms, has opened up the potential for new forms of participation. People are discovering ways to think about themselves and to participate in governance that would have perhaps been unthinkable a generation before. Their access to information and accessibility of information has both increased.

Although different forms of media are growing rapidly, and people are interested to learn more about contemporary issues, the media is behaving like a market product. It attempts to satisfy people's thirst for 'news' but basically keeps in focus its profitability and market sentiments. It is clear that in the contemporary context the media cannot become a mission towards the goal of social transformation on a large scale. It is doubtful whether it can even become a leading agent in the process of establishing a people based governance. The media, particularly the newspapers, have managed to create conditions for a liberal democracy, a 'public sphere', where the public can widely share its ideas.

In order for the public to renew their stake in media, it is essential that media ownership and control be regulated so as to prevent existing media monopolies from increasing their stake in the media industry. The government should increase its commitment for Community Radio and television at district and local levels. Citizens' movements that are committed towards reforms in the media industry should be encouraged. It is a fact that the press, television channels and the entire media could be a business. But the journalists per se are not for trade or business. Journalism is a social responsibility. It is a struggle to gain public space within the private sphere. One common weakness of Indian journalists is that they report news and views on the basis of the "power hierarchy of persons" rather than rationality of their views. The priority of news accorded to powerful persons obscures the very purpose of the media to speak truth to power and give voice to the voiceless. Such a media culture erodes the very philosophy of public interest and common good. In the long run, such a trend rationalises the culture of power and victimises the powerless sections of the society.

What one sees now in India is that the government often chooses policies to serve partisan interests, not the general interest of the public. On the other hand, the globalisation process has de-coupled the national society from the nation state and continues to disconnect citizenship from nationality. As globalization processes demand national consistency in laws, institutions, processes and behavioural patterns with the rest of the world, many actors in the Indian sub-system have been independently articulating to their counterparts abroad. This incongruence of social and political space places the Indian media in a dilemma: Should they be driven by self-interest like the other actors or propel themselves towards public interest orientations? Many of them have even been deviating from norms and rules that are constitutive of governance. Obviously, in the Indian multi-party polity, the elite did alter the basic principles of politics but not the style of governance they inherited from the ancient regime. Yet, it is also the media that have brought participatory rights of the people into the public sphere. The decisions of political power have thus been bound and popular sovereignty linked to universal human rights. Achieving governance goals requires the development of three critical processes: "accountability, which denotes the effectiveness with which the governed can exercise influence over those that govern; legitimacy, which is concerned with the rights of the state to exercise power over its citizens, and the extent to which those powers are perceived to be rightly exercised; and transparency, which is founded on the existence of mechanisms for ensuring public access to decision making" (Robinson, 1996:347). These attributes are central in upholding the national integrity system of governance. One can also add one more process to it - equity- given the state of underdevelopment in the Urban area and in general in the Indian society and its media in particular. The communications policy of the Indian government aims to expand radio, television and internet services proportionately in order to make them comprehensive. At the same time, the government also seems cautious enough to make them competitive by enabling them to adjust with the obligations arising out of the nation's pending membership of the WTO and GATT treaty. For the goal to be met successfully, synergy from the complementarity of public-private partnership is necessary in both business as well as in the media.

As human beings are social beings, not atomised individuals, real freedom can exist only in a cooperative society in which a modicum of social justice is attained and people can form groups

for the aggregation, articulation and communication of their interest upon the governance structures. Indian media, in general, have a profound influence upon the educational response to social disadvantages of people and the problems of social inequality, marginalisation and discrimination. Media discourses and research on bonded labour, Dalit, child labour, women, etc have been exemplary in articulating perspective transformation and re-socialisation. This is helping gender and child socialisation towards freedom, equality and identity and nourishing the potential for change in the dominant cultural values, including the prevailing masculine dynamics, political structure and political culture. Indeed, the Indian media are also helping to transform people into public by means of provoking discussions even in public spaces and the private rooms. Indian media have exposed the criminal negligence of decision-makers. Newspapers report widespread hunger, injustice and corruption in day to day life. Journalists have been calling for interventions from the government, civil society and international community to reduce the amount of intolerable poverty, inequality, exclusion, ignorance and marginalisation. Indian media have thus been evoking an image of the watchdog of the society promising to liberate politics from pre-political and anti-political impulses. The attempt by civil society organizations to assert the importance of issues like, 'governance for the people' vis-à-vis media is an attempt to search for its own public space and its own means. There must exist a relevant political consciousness so that a democratic impact is possible. Media to be effective must form part of an ideological and political context – of attitude, feeling, hope and critical democratic values and practice. Urban poor, specially, the dalits, women and other marginalized sections of the society are also using the media to make their voices heard. Media in India depends on the central impulses and aspirations of democratic governance.

27.6 Proactive Concerns of Media

In keeping with this understanding of democratic ideals, Indian mainstream media also place great emphasis on the creative role of new social movements espousing the values of peace, ecological preservation, democracy, human rights etc in democratic life. For the conception of politics to be adequate, it should involve the creation of a righteous space for the citizens to communicate and resolve issues of their concern. In this space, citizens can exercise their democratic rights and freedoms as well as include a variety of perspectives to deliberate on questions and seek answers. Politics is nothing but the processes involved in the execution of

these public duties. Politics is essentially public in the sense that the political sphere is shared equally by every member of the polity regardless of gender, wealth, class or caste position or political power. It is not essentially a manipulative vocation. And, to the extent that it appears to be so, it is only those selfish politicians who make it a dirty game. When their numbers rise, politics gets mired in crisis. In India, such a crisis has already led to the declaration of a state of emergency in the country and the suspension of fundamental rights and freedom of Indian citizens. It is a crisis whose roots lie in the malfunction of politics. If politics exclusively serves the private interest and exhibits apathy towards those who are not in politics but who do make up the public sphere, it cannot become a matter of public or collective concern or, by implication, political. In no way does such politics treasure a common ground for citizens and leaders of all hues. To use the public trust for private goals is just as serious a crime against the public as any seizure of public property for private gain. Anti-public politics, therefore, becomes anti-political. Democratic politics intends to widen the public sphere as it is deliberative, participatory, public, inclusive, and transparent. Anti-politics, by contrast, is essentially individualist, exclusive, private, non-public, and opaque. Anti-political trends become contagious if institutional mechanisms are not geared to correct them.

The public-private-donor deliberations have offered space for societal feedback, information sharing and coordination and have also enabled citizen groups to have wider access to knowledge and information. "Greater political activism means greater access, influence and control of the political system" (Patterson, 1999: 196) which broadens people's participation in public affairs. In an information- driven society, political power is increasingly defined in terms of the distribution of information. And, the media have become the central arena in the contest for power, resource and identity. The power of the media to control political thinking has been enormous. Transparency guarantees can play an instrumental role in "preventing corruption, financial irresponsibility and underhand dealings" (Sen, 2000:40). Technology can play a part here. In India, computerised networking of local private offices, government ministries and departments is gradually introducing transparency in their activities and operations and creating a bridge between the state and society. This process is expected to build a culture of trust. In other words, technology has a key role in governance. India has identified three areas of importance in formulating its information technology (IT) strategy- universal access to information and communication technology (ICT), education and training necessary for IT and

identification and adoption of IT applications. Public knowledge and access to information tools are essential not only to access government information but also to avail themselves of the social services and industry and business services. Those tools empower citizens to make important choices. Apart from the greater degree of transparency that government activities are infused with, these tools also induce media competitiveness to respond to the diverse challenges that emerge. One positive attribute of Indian polity is that it encourages open public debate on crucial matters affecting the life of citizens. Another positive aspect is the search for public rationale for every action of the government. This means information has become a core of the governing process.

The constitutional provision of the right to information (RTI) is expected to broaden the rights of citizens and access in the decision making of the government, provide meaningful control over the political processes and serve as an important tool of effective public oversight. But, the right to seek, receive and impart information is neither cost-free nor without responsibility. Nevertheless, the right to information and guaranteed rights are the two vital means of achieving democratic goals. A free and responsible press, an independent judiciary and proper government data information systems are perceived to be keys to good governance. It depends on the ability of journalists to a) access, gather, process, verify, and accurately furnish the information; and b) reach out to the diverse people, link them to an attentive public, policy community or decision makers. Information alone is of trivial value unless there are proper devices for using the knowledge obtained to influence government conduct in the executive sphere, especially in enhancing personal and national security, making and implementing of political decisions.

In the legislative sphere, giving people a voice means a higher level of political participation in the very centre of the policy making process. A greater level of media access is the first important step in facilitating public discussion on major policy shifts, representation and reflection of public preferences in policy making and articulating even the poor and marginalized citizen's interests in public policy matters. In the sphere of adjudication, the media can articulate equal access to entitlements, fundamental rights and social justice for the people as well as aim to establish a system of governmental accountability and due process of law. The

system of justice essentially constitutes collective goods. Indian planners and policy makers have also realised the intrinsic correlation between sovereignty of the people and media freedom and regularly organize programmes on stakeholder "consultation," "participation" and "ownership" on important public matters. India's government and its development partners have provided voice and participation to the media in legislative debates, preparation of Country Cooperation Frameworks and the India Development Forum. It is only "through voice- through informed discussion of the policies being pursued -that effective governance can be exercised" (Stiglitz, 1999:6). Greater information and transparency are vital instruments for informed public debate and for increasing popular trust and confidence in the institutions of governance. Governance today requires embeddedness of policy making in the consultative process, which involves the participation of all the stakeholders of society including the media. Media education supports the creation of an informed media public, a public that is able to critically judge between good and bad media content. Simultaneously however, for a true democracy, we also have to ensure that there is a strong stream of media free of any government control, with free speech and free press.

A free and responsible media is an important tool to make government accountable to its actions and make it responsive to the diverse needs of society. Freedom of communication is indeed a necessary but by no means a sufficient condition for its appropriate democratic performance (Meyer, 2000: 15). The public purpose of the media is to articulate the societal purpose to the institutions of governance. Though the government has a provision for spokespersons in each ministry and important departments in India and that it organises meet- the-press to facilitate the flow of information to the citizens, the exchanges between the government and media persons have not been satisfactory. The main problem appears to be a lack of experience with dealing with the media by the spokespersons. In fact, both sides are constrained by shortages of experts, resources and information base as well as a culture of listening and learning. Self-censorship or ethical codes of conduct of the media are an oft-advertised mode of self-regulation. But they are meaningless terminologies if they are not checked by other institutions of governance, such as an attentive public, effective judiciary and legislative means and even a responsive executive that does what it promises. Fair competition in the marketplace also helps ensure a free press. Indian press is free but not strong enough to facilitate inter-ethnic, inter-

regional and inter-religious communication aiming to contribute to the nation-building process. Media discourse in India is, therefore, weakly institutionalised and poorly sustained. Indian media often conduct on-the-spot interviews with the man on the street to help bring pressing societal problems to light. But such interviews are largely conducted in urban areas, mostly in the metros, where 60 per cent of all the publications are concentrated. By educating the public, the mass media can affect policy debates and policy choice thus connecting people to the institutions of governance. A broader spread of education and information and the growing pluralism of the society are certainly new pressures on public authorities to respond.

One should not also forget that newspapers are confined to small elites in urban areas and are quite unimportant in the overall process of communication since they do not reach a sizeable public in rural areas. This means that there could be a serious problem of urban biasness in governance institutions if corrective measures are not taken. This is the imperative to expand media reach to the farthest corners of the country. Indeed, decision-makers must be freed from a syndrome of listening only to the loudest voice.

There is also a reverse causality truth between the media and governance: Good governance also promotes media professionalism. Demand and supply of information go together. One cannot be included at the exclusion of the other. The media are powerful proxies of governance. What is still important is that new forms of information systems require new skills for journalists to be able to use the instruments to participate in innovation and market creation. Since governance is a purposive process striving to achieve societal goals, the media of communication serve as bridges linking the bottom with top social groups. It is hightime that the Indian journalists need to focus on the to better address the needs of the disenfranchised groups at the margins of India's society, economy and polity and help them project the truth independent of government influence and control. They should provide them greater representation in the mainstream. The solution to this problem lies in diversifying the ownership and control of media. It is equally important to make people aware of the main provisions of the Constitution, including their fundamental rights such as freedom of speech and freedom of information and making people active in public life, being players, not spectators. The help of the media themselves can be sought here.

Another aspect of a proper information flow is in the ownership structure of the media houses. When the government was the sole owner of the largest media houses, the criticisms were

simple to understand -that the government should not be the one to disseminate information about itself. But now the private sector is the more powerful counterpart in the news business. In the private sector also, it is the larger business houses that have been dominating the show. Known businessmen have owned the large publication houses, FM stations and even TV stations. This has led to criticisms regarding partisan reporting, which is alleged to be worse than the government media reporting as they have been protecting their business turfs through misinformation rather than seeking to fulfill the public's right to information.

There have even been cases where two large publications have been battling out in the pages with one writing exactly the opposite of what the other writes. This has nothing to do with trying to fulfill the public interest but rather about domestic private interest groups taking up the available tools (this time the media outlets) to lash out at each other. This shows that accountability of the newspapers is to the powers that be and the interests that own them rather than the people.

The ownership structure debate is a real one in India as it transcends other boundaries that South

Asian media houses have yet to cross. In spite of objections by the majority of media houses to foreign involvement in the sensitive information dissemination business, media control by foreigners is not a big problem in India. To make matters worse, a domestic TV channel is fighting it out with a government minister who has allegedly prevented it from satellite broadcasting its programmes. It is forced to uplink from another country. Although one may have bureaucratic reasons for these discrepancies, one cannot ignore the fact that the Indian public arena is being used to promote the private interests of not only the local interest groups but also foreign ones.

It is widely accepted that a free and investigative press is an important mechanism for ensuring the accountability of elected officials and bureaucracies to ordinary citizens. It is also well accepted that this mechanism is not working as well as it could be. Indian newspapers assign only 4% of their coverage to social reporting. The low priority accorded to social reporting is partly due to a perception among media professionals (publishers, editors, journalists, etc.) of a lack of public interest in news coverage of urban poverty and development issues. An important consequence of this is that major social issues facing hundreds of millions of people – such as

the lack of adequate basic services for the urban poor – receive almost no coverage in the mainstream South Asian media.

A number of other aspects of the relationships between local officials, the news media and citizens (particularly poor citizens) are not working well. A phenomenon closely related to the limited interest in social issues among journalists is the weakness of consumer culture among the urban poor. The urban poor tend not to see themselves as having the right or the capacity to exact a minimum standard of public service delivery from local officials. Furthermore, there is a tendency for the media to aggressively challenge and criticize the government as a matter of course. While independent, investigative journalism is an essential component of well-functioning democracies, an aggressively antagonistic relationship with the press can lead to a culture of withdrawal and secrecy among government officials. The result of this is a loss of confidence in government, inadequate understanding of complex social issues by citizens and journalists, and no improvement in the government's delivery of services.

The inclusion of the media would help civil-society organizations representing the urban poor to disrupt the 'vicious circle' of local government inattention to service delivery issues. The close presence of journalists, we reasoned, would encourage accountability in local government, transparency in decision-making, and ensure that the 'voice' of the urban poor was heard in service delivery issues which affect them. This, in turn, was expected to encourage the urban poor to have greater expectations and make greater demands of their local government.

27.7 Conclusion

Modern societies are gauged by the level of media involvement in monitoring the exercise of political sovereignty and affecting the conduct of governance. The policy question is: Do media promote good governance? Yes, they do. The effectiveness of many functions of governance actors depends on the media. Independent journalists report, analyse and criticise social evils and denounce injustice and oppression wherever they occur. At the same time they create incentives by positive coverage of the social ideals. In India, the relationship between the mass media and the performance of governance actors has to yield more. Mass media forms the basic cells of public and private life in India. Owing to their key roles, media professionals in India are invoking the principles of integrity and accountability of the private and public sectors and seeking rationale of every action of the government. One can also notice parameter shifts in

media freedom in India with the level and intensity of the democratisation process. Media regulation, media professionalism and responsibility and the state of governance go hand in hand.

27.8 Further Reading

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