Citizenship and Good Governance
The Sixth Annual Public Affairs Lecture

Smt. Sheila Dikshit
Hon’ble Chief Minister of Delhi

PUBLIC AFFAIRS CENTRE
BANGALORE
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Smt. Sheila Dikshit

*Hon’ble Chief Minister of Delhi, delivering the Sixth Annual Public Affairs Lecture*

Smt. Sheila Dikshit is the Chief Minister of National Capital Territory of Delhi. As the second woman Chief Minister of Delhi, she started her term in 1998 and her historic second term in 2003. She was appointed President of the Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee in 1998. She was instrumental in leading her party to sweeping victory in the Delhi Assembly elections in 1998.

Her first term as Chief Minister witnessed development through her internationally acclaimed initiative ‘Bhidari’, i.e. people’s participation in the process of governance. Her second term is marked by her vast experience in citizen-centric and open administration and democratic decentralisation.

She was Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Minister of State in Prime Minister’s Office under late Shri Rajiv Gandhi during 1986-1989.

Democratic decentralisation and people’s partnership in governance remain her major planks of administration. Development with a human face will be the cornerstone of
governance with infrastructure development in the core sectors, and power, transport and water being her priority areas. Smt. Sheila Dikshit has championed the cause of women at various fora and in various capacities. She launched the innovative ‘stree shakti’ programme in Delhi for real empowerment of women.

She represented India on the UN Commission on status of women from 1984-89. In the early 1970’s she was the Chairperson of the Young Women’s Association and was instrumental in setting up two of the most successful hostels for working women.

She is also the Secretary of the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust which plays a leading role in the promotion of international understanding. Under her aegis an Environmental Centre has been set up at the Trust.

She was born on March 31, 1938 in Kapurthala, Punjab. She holds a Master of Arts degree in History.
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by Hon’ble Chief Minister of Delhi, Smt. Sheila Dikshit

Introduction
I am happy to be with you this evening to deliver the Sixth Annual Public Affairs Lecture of Public Affairs Centre. I have great respect for the work of PAC. Your ideas and models are widely recognised in the country. We need many more initiatives of this kind from civil society, both to educate the public and hold the government accountable.

India, I believe is on the threshold of a new era. The world is looking at us. But I am afraid that unless we change our way of thinking, our way of functioning, we will fail to realise even half of the aspirations that have been evoked among the poor classes of our country. Globally speaking, India has a great message for the rest of the world on how to live in peace and harmony with different religions, languages, and regional affiliations. How will people live in peace? What are the challenges we face? I believe there are more challenges facing the world today concerning multiculturalism. We, in India, have always been tackling these issues in some way or the other. Therefore, we are looked upon as a role model of sorts by the rest of the world. What is India’s contribution going to be to meet the challenges that the world is facing at large?

Modern Public Governance
Post independence, the system of governance in our country has evolved continually. We are now at important crossroads. Due to the inevitable process of globalisation, expectations are changing rapidly. The perception of the state has changed from being ‘laissez faire’ to ‘welfare state’, and is now further evolving to ‘minimal state’ with maximum private participation. The challenges are before us. Politicians, bureaucrats, and concerned citizens have to accept this challenge of a new public management. These changing perceptions of the state are vital to our functioning in a modern
society: a society in which new relations have developed between individual, society, and state.

Even after five decades of intensive planning and government intervention, major problems like poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, communalism, lack of drinking water, housing, and basic health care facilities beset our country. Existing systems based on bureaucracy are not measuring up to the challenges. Expectations of citizens have heightened, but the government has been wanting. Major initiatives are required to transform existing administrative and bureaucratic structures, and introduce modern policy measures for responsive and effective governance.

The emerging new paradigm world-wide for government organizations is that of an ‘enterprising government’, a government which responds to what citizens want in a more market-oriented way, provides good quality services and products, and listens more closely to citizens. The reform steps include: public-private partnership, empowering citizens and clients, minimizing rules, measuring outcomes, redefining clients and customers, decentralizing authority, and employing competition/market-oriented government. This is in the tradition of a ‘minimal state’: a state that is limited to oversee essential functions and leaves welfare to private initiative and citizens.

If democracy has to take roots it has to be broad-based and participatory. People—the ultimate beneficiaries—should be part of the scheme of governance, right from the planning stage to execution and supervision. The Rajiv Gandhi government at the centre had already put this concept into practice by energizing the Panchayati Raj system at the village level and Urban Local Bodies at the city level, through constitutional means like the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts. The time has come to involve citizens directly at every level of governance, to realize need-based solutions and appropriate implementation mechanisms. The development of democratic political structures along these lines is the need of the hour to realise the aspirations of the people of our country.
The Bhagidari Project

About five years ago, we started the Bhagidari project with great hesitancy and hopes. The basic premise behind it was—administer the city to meet the expectations of its citizens. What are the expectations of a people from their government? And what is the government doing to fulfil them? Primed with that idea, we started the Bhagidari project as a movement. The Bhagidari movement is nothing more than the government’s new partnership with the people. What is the government doing? Why do we have an administrative service? Why do you elect representatives? These questions are buzzing in the public’s mind. We want to provide answers and reassure the people that government officials do more than sit around and push files.

We have to know what administration is effective for the people at large and what kind of interaction can the people have with their elected leaders on a continuing basis. Democracy is not just about casting a vote, electing the government, and forgetting about it for the next five years. Then returning again to cast a vote to either change or bring back that government. Is that the only role a citizen plays in democracy? I disagree. People have to be more interactive. They should say—the government belongs to us and is answerable to us. We are the reason that the administrator is sitting behind the desk.

In the government of NCT of Delhi, since the Congress government assumed office in December 1998, our major initiatives have been to put in practice this participatory system of governance called Bhagidari.

The concept of ‘Citizen Partnership in Governance’ involves system-wide change processes, implemented on the principle of multi-stake holders’ collaboration by applying ‘large group dynamics.’ It recognizes that the change process cannot be successfully implemented by a government in isolation without the participation of the citizens—the ultimate beneficiaries. For governance to be responsive the people must get involved.
Some of the issues on which action has been initiated through the Bhagidari scheme are: electricity bill collection and payment, collection and segregation of garbage, distribution of water and deployment of water tanker, assessment and collection of house tax, management of community parks and community halls, prevention of power theft, replacement of old/leaking water pipelines, crime prevention through involvement of citizen groups, neighbourhood watch scheme, verification of antecedents of domestic helps and tenants, traffic regulation, rain water harvesting, etc.

**Partnering with Citizens**

Our movement is carried out by interactions and workshops with citizen groups, Resident Welfare Associations, market associations, NGOs, women’s groups, school children, and other such homogeneous people. These groups attend the two- or three-day workshops where they discuss issues that concern them. The officers learn about their problems, offer solutions, and even outline their constraints. They try to make people understand that the government has to work within fiscal limitations and rigid legislative discipline. This kind of continuous dialogue with groups of people is helpful. We have so far conducted about 60 to 70 such workshops.

The city of Delhi is growing enormously. People pour in from less economically advanced states to avail the opportunities that the city provides. So, there is a spiralling population growth. How does the government provide for place, water, electricity, and public transportation for the ever-growing numbers? The challenge for the government is to work very fast just to maintain the status quo. I don’t think people understand the limitations of the government. People have to understand that government has to work according to rules and regulations and in the interest of people.
Smt. Sheila Dikshit releasing the publication, "Who Benefits from India’s Public Services?"

Subsequently, the concept of ‘Citizens’ Partnership in Governance’ has been extended to the areas of ‘School Education’ and ‘Management of Industrial Estates’. In the school education sector, social welfare committees have been formed consisting of members from Resident Welfare Associations, NGOs in education sector, and eminent citizens of the area to carry out systematic changes in the management of the government schools. The idea is to inculcate the feeling of ownership of the school by the committee. Similarly, in the management of the industrial estate, committees are being formed incorporating members from the Industrial Estate associations and other stakeholders to evolve consensus plans and solutions.

**Community Activities**

The ‘Say No to Fire Crackers Campaign’, started with the active participation of government and non-government schools of Delhi, was a huge success. In the Diwali of 2001 there was a significant drop in the use of fire crackers and consequent air pollution levels. When there were earthquakes in Gujarat and Jammu & Kashmir, Delhi’s children donated the money which otherwise they would have spent on buying crackers, to the Prime Minister’s & Chief Minister’s Relief Funds.
Several initiatives were taken to involve “citizen groups” in various environment improvement schemes like ‘Say No to Plastics Campaign’ and ‘Clean Yamuna Campaign’. Large numbers of citizens participate every year in the ‘Clean Yamuna Campaign’, which has taken the shape of a movement because of community participation. School children through 1601 Eco Clubs have been instrumental in these campaigns. For the ‘Say No to Plastics Campaign’, almost every school has an eco club that makes paper bags out of waste materials. Eco clubs are there in both government and private schools.

In government schools we faced the problem of teachers not keeping to the school timings and that affected the academic outcome. Due to the school Kalyan Samithis, our school results that showed a 32% passing rate today show a more respectable 75%. The government spends about Rs.900/- to Rs.1000/- per child. We have started computer aided learning at schools. It is a first of its kind, where the school children interact with the students of the University of New York—talking to and ‘seeing’ them.

We ran a campaign for four years from 1998–99 to 2003-04 for a greener Delhi. The city’s coverage of green has increased from a mere 37 sq. km to 268 sq. km. And children, housewives, and the people achieved this. When we took office in 1998-99, we progressively planted 12 lakh saplings all over Delhi. We are providing saplings to citizens, schools, and colleges free of cost. We have this practice that if for some reason you cut one tree, you have to plant eight and look after them.

**Other Initiatives**

As a commitment towards the ‘Citizens’ Partnership in Governance’, nine District Development Committees have been set up with the objective of decentralising district level forums to resolve and monitor issues pertaining to civic and other services. One nominated MLA of the concerned district will chair the committee. The District Dy. Commissioner will be the Chief Executive Officer of the committee.
The major objective of the scheme is to:

- Decentralise approach in decision-making regarding public utility and civic amenities
- Involve people directly and through elected representatives in the planning and execution of projects and policies
- Minimise delays on account of multiplicity of authorities
- Provide single-window approach to the public for their problems
- Provide a balanced and equitable development of facilities in different districts

Water conservation measures have also been initiated with community participation through the implementation of various ‘Rain Water Harvesting Schemes’ in community parks, group housing societies, apartment blocks, clubs and community centres. Citizen groups have implemented several such projects in Delhi under the Bhagidari Scheme. The government has provided adequate financial and technical assistance in the implementation of these schemes. To encourage them, Chief Minister’s Rain Water Harvester Awards have been instituted.

Project ‘Stree Shakti’ is one more attempt of the Government of Delhi to attain the goal of empowerment of women, especially from the economically weaker sections of the society. It is an integrated capacity building project through partnership with NGOs to increase participation of women in mainstream society. Three areas that significantly impact the process of empowerment of women have been chosen as priority for intervention. These are health, literacy, and income generation. At camps, we distribute annual medication, like iron tablets. Since many women from the economically backward strata are weak because of a poor diet, they are taught how to cook a balanced meal.

**A Citizen Centric Approach**

We have undertaken many other initiatives to empower citizens. Ours is one of the first Governments to give an important right to the citizens through the Right to Information Act, 2001.
Nearly 74 departments have prepared Citizen Charters under our initiative. The primary source of a Citizen’s Charter is to improve the quality of service offered and to ensure citizen satisfaction. The principles governing the Charter are standards of services, value for money, information, courtesy and helpfulness.

We have initiated a Standing Committee on Administrative Reforms. The committee headed by Chief Secretary and consisting of Principal Secretary (Finance), Planning, IT, AR, Law, Transport meets twice a month to review the working of each department.

A view of the audience

The Government of NCT of Delhi has decided to take up a ‘Social Audit of Services’. It will help identify areas in which citizens experience high stress in accessing services, evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of grievance mechanism, and compare service providers across agencies. It may also serve as a surrogate for competition among agencies and trigger corrective action. Some of the agencies covered in the first phase of Social Audit are hospitals, schools, transport department (including DTC), Food & Civil Supplies, Sub-Registrar Offices, and issue of all kinds of certificates by various agencies. The exercise has been taken through the Public Affairs Centre, and Public Affairs Foundation, Bangalore.
What happens to me when I retire and my pension is not given to me for the next 10 years? I keep going to the office and still my pension does not come to me. We have put up public grievance cells, which are active cells lodging many complaints, to rectify this problem. These complaints have been followed up. We have cells working in every government department, catering to the citizens’ queries and demands. If a citizen does not get water, the cell has to act immediately. And if they are not able to supply water through the piped water lines, the area will get 2 or 3 water tankers so that the residents’ needs are met.

The handling of public grievances is a vital activity. Public grievances provide us with an opportunity to introspect on our systems and an opportunity to rectify the mistakes. I am pleased that my government has provided a system of online lodging of public grievances, which is monitored by my office. The objective of Public Grievances and Redressal Cell is to redress individual grievances related to the functioning of Delhi Government. Grievances relating to police, MCD, DDA, NDMC, DVB, DJB, etc., are taken up in the first phase. The departments of Delhi government also have their own grievance redressal mechanism.

We have made a very, very useful beginning, but only a beginning. People are demanding various facilities. There are people in government who are negligent. But how did that happen? It happened because municipality workers, officers or engineers were not held accountable. There can be a responsive and open government only when people are aware of their rights.

**Recognition**

This Bhagidari Movement has been recognised the world over. The ‘Bhagidari’ concept, has received ‘UN Public Service Award, 2005’ for improving transparency, accountability, and responsiveness in public service. We have tried to do our best in a very small way. We are not scientific like Dr. Samuel Paul or Dr. Ravindra, but we have made strides, and they have been innovative.
The Government of India has taken on Bhagidari to be one of the best practices in India, and will use this as a role model. The Bhagidari system has been documented by the Department of Administrative Reforms, Ministry of Personnel, Pension & Public Grievances, and Government of India, which has found it suitable for replication in other administrative systems. The Government of India had recommended it for the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) Award, 2002.

Conclusion
The Bhagidari movement needs to be seen through, we owe it to our citizens. We can then achieve the civic and administrative reforms that other countries have attained. We have to find methods of changing the mindset of people and administrators. Administration in our country is not updated. The rules were made long back and need to be upgraded. We are doing our own bit to bring about changes that we had aspired for, and find our place in the world. I have great admiration for the work that Dr. Samuel Paul is doing in Bangalore, and the leaders in our community are trying to do elsewhere. They are trying to reach out to the people to bring about a change both in the thinking of citizens, and the public grievance set up.

Thank you.
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Public Affairs Centre
422, 80 Feet Road,
VI Block, Koramangala
Bangalore - 560 095, India
Telefax : 25537260 / 25525452 /
25525453 / 25520246
E-mail : pacindia@vsnl.com
Website: www.pacindia.org