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Is good governance possible without good politics?

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It is governance which sets the course the country takes, direction of development and future of political parties. Good governance is not possible without political parties themselves being accountable, transparent and responsive to people. Can anyone disagree? But what have we done to make sure that our political parties compete to be more transparent and accountable?

While everything else is witnessing change in the country, our political parties do not seem to realize those compulsions even in their own interest. Despite every session of Parliament in last couple of decades witnessing a discussion on political and electoral reforms, the core of the issues could not even be taking. It is against that background that we must thank and compliment our civil society groups for what they were able to achieve recently in that direction.

First it was long drawn fight to get the RTI Act passed by the Parliament, and second, get contesting candidates declare as an obligation their wealth, criminal background, etc. while filing nomination to contest an election. Since that has become part of the poll process, we had seen in the country two rounds of elections for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. Both these landmark measures have shown the country what amazing sensitivities could be generated and changes could be thought of. A wealth of data and analysis that ADR and Election Watch Groups across the States has brought to fore in the last couple of years has activated more people

in the country than any thing else Parliament has done prepatory for good governance in the country.

What the Central Information Commission (CIC) and the Courts have come up in response to public interest litigations go a long way in unleashing much needed political reforms. The CIC has given an equally landmark order that political parties are public authorities and as such come under RTI. My article a few weeks ago in Hans India discussed "How RTI is the best bet for political parties".

More recently the Supreme Court has stuck down Clause 8(4) of Representation Act thus disqualifying politicians from holding office once convicted and also debarred those in police or judicial custody from contesting elections to Assembly and Lok Sabha. Think of its implications – not less than 30 percent of all MLAs and MPs in the country have declared themselves criminal background. And about 14 percent are even convicted.

Against the background of increase in "competitive populism" among political parties, the Supreme Court viewed that free-SP will shake the roots of free and fair elections hence it called upon the Election Commission to frame guidelines on such free for all or lures to sway voters as part of code of conduct of elections. This is what Supreme Court felt despite not considering such free-SP as "corrupt practice" and an "electoral offence" under Representation of People Act.