

Good Governance

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Introduction:

Discovery of Good Governance is an unending Process. And history is the evidence for that. People have always been in search of a government which will work for their good. We can also see some proposals in political theories of Hobbs, Lock, Rousseau, Mill, Marx, and even Gandhiji. We should also not forget to mention contributions of Kautilya by his 'Arthashastra'. From this we can understand that the concept of good governance can be applicable to any type of government because people living in any type of government want a government which will promote their good. All around the world, we hold certain ideals that steer us to that which is good, not just for ourselves but for the rest of society. These ideals guide and lead us to demand from our leader's integrity and honor in the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented. They move us to work and demand for good governance. This paper tries to discuss the concept discussing some definitions and also throws light on the characteristics of good governance. The paper also tries to discuss the attributes in context of India.

The concept of good governance emerged mainly because practices of bad governance, characterized by corruption, unaccountable governments and lack of respect for human rights, had become increasingly dangerous, and the need to intervene in such cases had become urgent. Further we can say that people look upon good governance as way to overcome all their problems and live a prosperous and a life without obstacles. Further I think with the rise of democratic states the importance of good governance has also risen as it also reflects democratic values. Rather it has become a "hot" topic as evidence mounts on the critical role it plays in determining societal well-being. The Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, reflects a growing consensus when he states that "good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development"

What is Good governance?-

Recently the terms "governance" and "good governance" are being increasingly used in development literature. Bad governance is being increasingly regarded as one of the root causes of all evil within our societies. Major donors and international financial institutions are increasingly basing their aid and loans on the condition that reforms that ensure "good governance" are undertaken.

Governance:

The concept of "governance" is not new. It is as old as human civilization. Simply put "governance" means: the process of decision-making and the

process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). Governance can be used in several contexts such as corporate governance, international governance, national governance and local governance.

Meaning and Definition:

A. By World Bank (In the 1992 report entitled “Governance and Development”)

“The method in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development”.

It is concluded that sustainable development can only take place if a predictable and transparent framework of rules and institutions exists for the conduct of private and public business. This definition underlines the importance of the four major pillars Accountability, Transparency, The rule of law and Participation

B. The Asian Development Bank (AsDB) (. In an October 1995 policy paper)

“The manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources of development”. Further, in a separate opinion issued by the AsDB General Counsel, it was explained that governance has at least two dimensions:

- (a) Political (e.g., democracy, human rights); and
- (b) Economic (e.g., efficient management of public resources)

Good governance has become an important element of the political and economic agendas, and has meanwhile been better specified along with the proliferation of good practices that take the concept into consideration.

C. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) definition of good

“Governance is set out in a 1997 UNDP policy document entitled “Governance for Sustainable Human Development”.

Governance is the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences.

D.Canada Institute of Governance

“Governance is the process where by societies or organizations make important decisions determine whom they involve and how they render account.”

It emphasizes principle of participation by all the stakeholders of good governance. Without participation this process is meaningless.

Eight Characteristics of Good Governance:

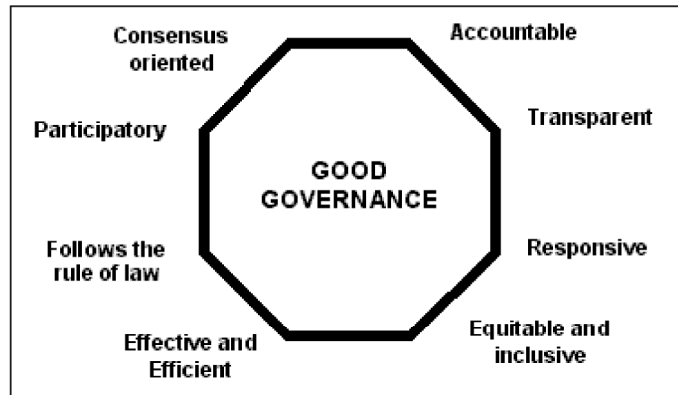


Figure: 1 Characteristics of Good Governance:

The following Diagram shows the various Characteristics of Good Governance:

From the above diagram and the above given definitions we can conclude that ‘Governance’ is the exercise of power or authority – political, economic, administrative or otherwise – to manage a country's resources and affairs. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. Vivek Chopra has described it in the word ‘SMART’ which stands for Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive, and Transparent. ‘Good governance’ means competent management of a country’s resources and affairs in a manner that is open, transparent, accountable, equitable and responsive to people’s needs.” These characteristics of Good Governance can be stated as follows. They are also accompanied by the discussion how much India is successful in achieving these attributes.

Characteristics:

a. Participation

In a government where good governance is the norm, citizens can actively participate in the process of decision-making, directly or indirectly through groups or agencies that represent their interests.

The passage of the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments in 1994 has been hailed as a landmark in the evolution of local governments in India. The amendments provided rural and urban local governments with a constitutional status that they had previously lacked and reinforced this status by mandating regular elections to locally elected bodies. Further, the amendments mandated reservations of positions in these local bodies for women and for individuals from two traditionally disadvantaged (and constitutionally recognized) groups: Dalits (Scheduled Castes, i.e., castes at the bottom of, or more accurately, excluded from, the traditional Hindu caste hierarchy) and Adivasis. Further 50%

reservation for women in local self bodies in most of states has increased the participation.

However, Decisions can only prove to be good when they are properly implemented. And people also have to play significant role in this process because all decisions are related to people. People can actively participate in implementation by fulfilling their duties towards national good. Anybody is eligible to enjoy rights only when he fulfills his duties. Emergence and participation of NGOs in this process is an important step in this regard.

b. Rule of law

The concept of good governance is undoubtedly linked with the citizens' right of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness. This could be secured in a democracy only through the rule of law.

Good governance enables laws, particularly human rights, to be implemented fairly and impartially. Impartial enforcement of laws requires an independent judiciary and an impartial and incorruptible police force.

Indian constitution provides for an independent and impartial judiciary, and fundamental rights to all the citizens without any difference.

c. Transparency

Transparency means that decisions taken and their enforcement are done in a manner that follows rules and regulations. It also means that information is freely available and directly accessible to those who will be affected by such decisions and their enforcement. It also means that enough information is provided and that it is provided in easily understandable forms and media.

The Right to Information Act 2005 (RTI) is the expression of transparency of government of India. However the Act is misused many a times by people may be due to lack of knowledge or any other interest. History of civilizations reflects that weapon used in an improper way has destroyed that civilization. So it is us to us that how to use this weapon.

d. Responsiveness

In a government exercising good governance, agencies promptly serve and respond to the needs of its constituents. India has chosen the parliamentary democracy type of government which is responsible government.

e. Consensus orientation

In any society, interests and opinions are varied. Good governance strives to mediate these differences so that a broad consensus on what is best for all is always achieved. Rise of many regional parties are leading to decline of national parties. Different parties stand for different interests and different issues of the people who support them. There is lack of consensus among them. Hence India has to overcome this situation to achieve this objective.

f. Equity All men and women, regardless of age, gender or status in life have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being.

Article 14 of The Constitution of India provides to the citizens of India the right to equality before law and equal protection of the laws to all regardless of any difference.

g. Effectiveness and efficiency

A government exercising good governance produces results that meet the needs of its people while making the best use of resources.

As political parties lack consensus on many issues this affect the efficiency and effectiveness. And because of this we are facing problems like inflation, unemployment, brain drain and so on and so forth.

h. Accountability

Accountability is a key requirement of good governance. Not only governmental institutions but also the private sector and civil society organizations must be accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders. Who is accountable to who varies depending on whether decisions or actions taken are internal or external to an organization or institution. In general an organization or an institution is accountable to those who will be affected by its decisions or actions. Accountability cannot be enforced without transparency and the rule of law.

Indian Government is based on the principal of collective responsibility and can be in power up to when it enjoys vote of confidence. RTI 2005 has also imposed more accountability on the part of governmental as well as semi governmental institutions. Lokpal & Lokayuktas are also the further steps in this regards. We can add one more characteristic to it which is stated below.

i. Strategic vision

Leaders and the public have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development. Good governance has become an important element of the political and economic agendas, and has meanwhile been better specified along with the proliferation of good practices that take the concept into consideration. That is political parties have such agendas which will take the state towards good governance.

As discussed above the scenario of party politics in India has become very ambiguous which lead to lack of consensus which ultimately leads to lack of strategic vision. Hence there is need to have change in the views of political parties and a consensus on public policies to have a broad future perspective.

Reform and standards

the state, the private sector, and civil society these are three institutions can be reformed to promote good governance .the need and demand for reform can vary depending on the priorities of that country society, variety of country level initiatives and international movement put emphasis on various types of governance reform .each movement for reform establishes criteria for what they consider good governance based on their own needs and agendas

The following are examples of good governance standards for prominent organizations in the international community.

Example;

- 1) The international monetary fund
- 2) United nation
- 3) World bank

Findings:

- A working definition of governance can be combined as “processes, systems and structures that guide the social, economic and political relationships”.
- Participation is the foremost important attribute of Good governance. Participation not only in decision making but implementing these policies.
- Attributes of good governance must be determined by the nation’s vision of the larger social and economic goal(s) and the value system it wants to promote. A consensus among political parties and the government of the day, is very important to move towards a minimal common agenda across the spectrum of political thinking on a value system which would promote the maximum of attributes.
- The quality of Governance dependence upon the fulfillment of the attributes of good governance.
- In order to develop a vision of governance, it is necessary to map out the social goals in a time perspective. For operational purposes.
- All political power in democracy stems from people. Central therefore to governance is empowerment of people by increasing their control over governance.

Conclusion:

Thus from the above discussion of definitions and characteristics of good governance we can arrive at the conclusion that Good Governance is goal of every civilization. However any civilization can achieve this only if it fulfills the said attributes. We must effort to ensure sustainable human development. On the surface level we think that it is like Utopia, actions must be taken to work towards with the idea state with the aim of making it a reality.

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