



Good Governance: Accountable Mechanism

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Abstract

The article to the concepts and their relevance to 'institutionalising legitimate and accountable government at all levels'. It ensures that those who lead and run governments unequivocally accountable to the citizens. Numerous approaches, techniques and institutions are in the process of maintaining and assuring accountable mechanism. New and Modern arrangements are constantly being brought into play to ensure that accountability is maintained. Accountability, from this view point, becomes the focal prerequisite of good governance. It applies not only to government institutions but also to the private institutions and civil society organizations, which must be accountable to the people and respective institutional stakeholders.

Keywords : Good Governance, Accountability, Efficiency, Rationality, Transparent,

Introduction

Governments have played a vital role in the life of man throughout the period of recorded history and any government worth its name and having the responsibility of governing a polity must develop and promote the parameters of good governance as its seminal core. It has become the most debatable issue of the day all over the world and particularly in the Third World Countries including India.

Good governance, as a concept, is applicable to all sections of society such as the Government, Legislature, Judiciary, the Media, the Private Sector, the Corporate Sector, Co-operatives, duly registered trusts, and non-governmental organizations. Public Accountability and transparency are as relevant for the one as for the other. It is only when all these and various other sections of society conduct their affairs in a socially responsible manner that the objective of achieving larger good of

the largest number of people in society can be achieved.

In the past few decades, a large number of political leaders academicians and public functionaries in the Third World Countries have been discussing ways and means for governing their societies efficiently and effectively. They have advocated different forms of political and administrative systems and methods of governance to reconcile the interest of the citizens with that of the state.

This conceptual confusion notwithstanding, the majority of 'informed' people in the Third World countries think that ' Good Governance' means an effective, credible, legitimate, citizen friendly and people centric administration. Further, it is free from administrative vices and dysfunctional ties. This public view of good governance derives its relevance in the context of mis-governance in many Third World Countries. The democratic form of government has proved to be ineffective here for checking the swindling of public



funds for private gains by the elected leaders as well as by the bureaucrats and other public servants; mis-management is found all round and in rampant form.

In some agencies, the new idea of 'governance' or 'good governance', borrowing from the U.S. corporate language has simply meant good quality management. This narrow definition of governance envisages limiting the role of the state whilst ensuring it provided the necessary frame work of policy and institutions for markets to flourish. Institutions in this view exist to iron out imperfections in the market place, and to provide a limited range of what economists define as 'public goods'. A slightly broader version of the definition emphasizes the need to strengthen the institutional capacity of the state 'through the enhancement of autonomy, efficiency, rationality, and training.

As the term good governance implies, it assumes that there is a government which would like to govern with a firm hand. It's writ must run and should be acknowledged and the people should not take the government for granted. In practical terms, it would mean the government taking all actions to retain its firm holds over people, their institutions and the situations arising from day-to-day problems. Looking around the country not many governments would pass this test. The foremost test of good governance is the respect for rule of Law. The governance must be based on rule of Law. Every lawfully established government must govern according to the laws of the land. All its actions must uphold the rule of law and any effort to take the law in one's own hand or to undermine the law by any one, how-so-ever, high and mighty he may be, must be dealt with speedily, decisively and in an exemplary

manner. It is unfortunate that even after 65 years of Independence, one cannot say with confidence that the governance in most states is based rule of Law. In any discussion on good governance, attention must be focused on the primary responsibilities of the government. These must include the maintenance of law and order, administration of Justice, and welfare of economically and socially weaker sections of society in terms of provision of safety net for them.

It can truly be said that he who governs the least governs the best! If this principle had been followed in governance all these years, India would not have presented a picture of such squalor, filth, illiteracy and poverty even after 65 years of Independence.

The World Bank indicators of good governance encompassing democracy, transparency and accountability, it may be said that the whole idea of good governance is that of a participative system in which those who are called upon to govern on behalf of the people are motivated with a will to giving their best, serving and doing good to the people, solving their problems and making their lives more liveable, satisfying and enjoyable. The essential prerequisites for quality governance are that the system should be good and suited to the needs, aspirations, background and ethos of the people concerned and those selected for operating the system should be endowed with character and competence and motivated by the spirit of public service.

Good governance is strongly advocated by influential donors like the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and multilateral organizations like the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and



Common Wealth Secretariat to stem the tide of misgovernance. Academic world is now literally flooded with books, journal articles and professional and seminars or conference papers on good governance.

'Good Governance' is equivalent to purposive and development-oriented administration committed to improvement in quality of life of the people. It is also related to the capacity of political and administrative system to cope with the emerging challenges of society. It refers to adoption of new values of governance to establish greater efficiency, legitimacy and credibility of the system. "Good Governance is associated with efficient and effective administration in a democratic framework" It is, therefore, very difficult to give a comprehensive definition of good governance which comprises all these aspects. Moreover, it is a dynamic and progressive concept and emerging factors help in refining it every moment. At the best, it can be stated that good governance is associated with efficient and effective administration in a democratic framework which is transparent, accountable, people oriented, participatory and responsive.

Emergence of the concept:

The need of good governance has been universally accepted irrespective of time and space parameters. In the entire human history, it has been recognized that the state and its machinery should work for the welfare and well being of the masses. On this sole criterion, the states or governments have been designated as good or bad whether the classification had been made by the Greek political thinkers like Plato and Aristotle or by the Indian Philosophers like Manu, Kautilya, etc., However, the term good governance in

its present form has been coined by the World Bank in 1989 with reference to the development administration of Sub-Saharan nations.

Even today governance as a concept remains illusive. That is why caution is recommended in approaching the concept of good governance. There are a number of ways through which one can approach the concept of good governance. 1st, it can be contrasted with what is called bad or poor governance, 2nd is to understand what the concept means, 3rd one can also look at the potential benefits of institutionalizing good governance.

Essential characteristics of good governance:

The essential characteristics of good governance are:

- Promotion of democracy and open pluralistic societies;
- Strengthening of transparent, accountable and effective national government;
- Reinforcement of the rule of law, in including fair and accessible legal and Judicial systems;
- Promotion of an independent media and dissemination of information; and
- Anti – Corruption initiatives.

Good governance cannot be achieved without corruption-control. For corruption-control to be effective, a number of measures need to be initiated on a priority basis. Experience of Common-wealth countries indicate that sustained action is required at two levels.

1. Systematic reform which target underlying weaknesses in policy, administration and polity and create an



environment conducive to the elimination of corruption; and

2. Specific focused, national anti-corruption strategies.

It was strongly emphasized in a meeting of Common Wealth Heads of States that a serious national anti-corruption programme could only succeed if there was strong and unequivocal commitment at the highest political level.

It has to be admitted that the governance in India has not changed much since Independence. We have certainly made some gestures and 'noises' such as adoption of Citizens' Charter, passing of laws on right to information, mousing the platitudes of downsizing of the government and promoting the mantra of the public accountability and transparency. But, the impact of these measures is hardly perceptible to the Common person. There is a widespread disenchantment with the functioning of governments all through the country, irrespective of which political party is in power. It is not, therefore, surprising to see the anti incumbency factor in operation in practically all elections in the states as also at the centre. People are clamouring for a clean, open, transparent, accountable, corruption free and sensitive administration. It must be appreciated that the process of economic liberalization and globalization will not go far enough without adequate attention being bestowed on good governance. There has been a clamour of demand from foreign investors for transparency in decision-making in the government. Good governance can directly contribute to higher rate of economic growth.

Parameters of good governance:

The World Bank has identified some aspects or parameters of good governance which have assumed significance for both the developed and developing nations. These are given below:

1. Political accountability, including the acceptability of political system by the people and regular elections to legitimize the exercise of political power.
2. Freedom of association and participation to various religious, social, Economic, cultural and professional groups in the process of governance.
3. An established legal framework based on the rule of law and independence of Judiciary to protect human rights, secure social justice and guard against exploitation and abuse of power.
4. Bureaucratic accountability including openness and transparency in administration.
5. Freedom of information and expression needed for the formulation of public policies, decision making, monitoring and evaluation of government performance.
6. A sound administrative system leading to efficiency and effectiveness. This, in turn, means cost-effectiveness.
7. Cooperation between the government and the civil society organization.

Good governance is expressly linked to an enabling environment conducive to the enjoyment of human rights and "Promoting growth and sustainable human development". In underscoring the importance of development, co-operation for securing good governance



in countries in need of external support, the resolution recognized the value of partnership approach to development co-operation and the inappropriateness of perspective approaches.

The Government is periodically designing and implementing additional policies and strategies aimed at ensuring the sustainability of the country's economic growth. The activities carried out, so far, as regards meeting the Millenium Development Goals at the national level, in the short term, thereby ensuring sustainable development, are quite promising, though they need to be further enhanced. In this regard, enabling all stakeholders to contribute their share to development, peace, democracy and good governance is important. This, of course, demands increasing the motivation of the public, government and non-governmental organizations.

Good governance is mandatory because it enables citizens to properly use their human and democratic rights and develop their country with a sense of ownership and responsibility. The prevalence of good governance at all administrative levels and government bodies is vital for accelerating development and ensuring that citizens benefit from development and the national wealth.

Conclusion:

It would be pertinent to quote the seven sins of public life pointed out by the father of nation Mahatma Gandhi in the context of the concept of good governance. These are politics without principles, wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity and worship

without sacrifice. These lessons are as valid now as when first enunciated in the 1920's.

However, It is hoped that RTI Act will prove a milestone in the operationalisation of the concept of good governance in India. It can check the bureaucratic hegemony, ensure transparency, accountability and responsiveness in administration and empower the citizens with opportunities to participate and to have access to information concerning public functioning or administration in all forms and at all levels.

Therefore, through closing ranks against all circumstances and obstacles, that challenge democratization and by further enhancing the efforts of our country for development, peace, democracy and good governance we need to pull our country from the prevalent state of poverty and backwardness. By recognizing the crucial role of good governance for the development of our country, we must work Unison with a sense of civic responsibility.

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