



Good Governance : an Appraisal

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KEYWORDS :

Governance is the process of decision making and the process by which decision are implemented (or not implemented). This term has gained significance since 1989 with its advocacy by the World Bank. The World Bank is said to have reinvented it in the different context as a new approach to development. Governance became a model to compare ineffective economics of political bodies with viable economies and political bodies. The concept centers on the responsibility of governments and governing bodies to meet the needs of the masses as opposed to select groups of society. The standards which are common to western democracies as measures of goodness in government, considered ideal for defining 'Good Governance'.

Nayef Al-Rodhan described 8 minimum criteria for Good Governance : a) Participation, Equity and inclusiveness; 2) rule of law 3) separation of powers 4) Free , independent and responsible media 5) Governmental Legitimacy; 6) accountability ; 7) Transparency; 8) Limiting the distorting effects of money in politics (2009).

Good Governance aims at achieving much more than to efficient management of economic and financial resources or public services. It is a broad reform strategy to make government more open, responsive, accountable and democratic, regulate the private sector and strengthen institutions of Civil Society. Good governance is qualitative dimension of governance. A governance system that enables all important stake-holders to participate in governing mechanisms, processes and institutions emphasizing participation and responsiveness is considered to be good or effective. Good governance is a combination of the efficiency concerns of public management and accountability concerns of governance (Uma Medury 2010)

Good governance relates to enhancing the quality of governance though empowerment, participation, equity and justice. Without transparent and accountable institutions and the capacity to develop the policies and laws to enable a country to manage its market and its political life in an open, but just way, development is not sustainable (Brown 2000)

The World Bank has defined 'good governance' as having six main characteristics. These are :

- a) Voice and accountability that include civil liberties and political stability.
- b) Government effectiveness, which comprises the quality of policy making and public service delivery.
- c) The quality of the regulatory framework.
- d) The rule of law which includes protection of property rights.
- e) Independence of Judiciary.
- f) Curbs on corruption.

Aim of Good Governance : Creation of Good Society.
The Idea of Good Society

The term society represents one or more group of people. The idea of good society encompasses the idea of welfare for all.

Various philosophers on Good Society.

Plato – His ideal society is a state perfected by Justice and governed according to the idea of good. (Common good)

Hobbes – His conception of good society gives maximum rights to individual and limits functions of the state to maintain law and order.

Locke – He associates good society with basic rights of citizens limiting the role of the state to maintain law, order and foreign policy.

Rousseau – He associated good society with the good of community where individual right are subversive of rights of community.

Karl Marx – He associates the good of society with the community ownership of resources and community based distribution.

Rawls – This idea of good society combines the system of constitutional democracy with the criterion of economic distribution which should be able to do justice with the worst placed people of society.

What constitutes a good society – The idea of good society has been associated with the system of governance, system of economy, justice, ethical behavior etc. There seems to be a broad agreement on basic values and principles which should characterize a good society:

1. Respect for human dignity and human rights : no slaves, no torture, and no cruel or inhuman punishment

2. Equality before law : no discrimination on the basis of race, caste, colour, religion, age and gender.

3. Cultural liberty and national integration – which calls for the protection of the rights and interest of the minorities.

4. Non living in object poverty – or suffering injustice

5. A democratic polity and good governance.

Thus the good society is a barrierless world, which is based on the principles of universal goodwill and global citizenry, respects the concepts of equality, justice rights and liberty.

Different Dimensions of Good Governance

The word 'State' is defined as combination of Four organs (a) defined territory (b) Population (c) Government (d) Sovereignty. Government's success is seen on the basis of how it is able to distribute the territorial resources and other services among all members of the community (Population). The basic necessity of Food, clothing, shelter and security are the criteria for the Government to be tagged as Good or bad. Equitable distribution on maximum coverage base seems feasible. One should be satisfied with the governance if it is able to provide basic necessities without much trouble. Good governance can further be clarified under the following dimension.

- a) Political Dimension
- b) Economic Dimension
- c) Social Dimension
- d) Psychological Dimension

a) Political Dimension : It is accepted that cause of justice is best served by political institution. Dates back to Plato, the idea of good society was based on philosopher king who is the fountain of virtues. Virtuous society is the ultimate aim of philosopher king. Contractarian Thinkers advocate that government which making barbarian insecure and lonely man fit for a organized and peaceful society is a good government. The Utilitarians base their idea of Good Governance on the basis of "Maximum happiness for maximum people". The government which patronize, these considered as good government. According to Mill, goodness of government depends on how it is able to impart values in its subjects. In other words, the criteria for a good government rely on development of virtues and mental capabilities of its citizens. In Indian context, Gandhi and Jaiprakash were of the view that good governance is based on idea by which government is able to rescue person from vicious circle of poverty.

b) Economic Dimension : The early liberalism emphasized on the free market economy supported by a less interfering political authority. The champions of economic liberalism focused on the goodness of the governance its pursuit of giving more freedom in economic sphere. The liberal thinkers such as Adam Smith, reflecting the views of early writers, such as David Hume, argued that the purpose of economic activities should be to increase overall levels of wealth and that increased division of labour and specialization could achieve this end. The market, Smith argued, was guided by an invisible hand that made it self-regulating. Accordingly, state intervention would lead to distortions and inefficiencies. In this Laissez Faire vision, the state's role was to be confined to the protection of society from external threats and the provision of certain public goods. For the early liberals the criteria for good governance seemed confined to economic liberty and less interfering political institutions.

The other kind of economic dimension can rest upon the just balance between demand and supply with a reasonable/affordable price base. On the political side, liberalism promotes democracy, on economic side, it promotes capitalism. Democracy is concerned with fulfilling needs and aspirations of ordinary people, but capitalism results in the concentration of economic power in the hands of the few, who may use it against the interest of ordinary people. The situation is sought to be rectified by the mechanism of the welfare state.

The champions of new liberalism stand for 'rolling back' of the Welfare state which has immensely expanded its sphere of activities. For neo-liberals, the concept of good governance is to retrieve from the ideas of welfare as it is inimical to individual liberty.

Social Dimension

Religion and culture play an important role in social cohesion. The religious attitude of tolerance and peace and culture values of pluralism are conducive to good governance. Machievelli's famous saying "Politics and ethics can't go together" reminds us of a real politics. Gandhian version of politics, "Politics is not above morality and ethics" reminds us that every ideal political system should safeguard the moral values and ethics. Religion should never be above society. As Marx has said, "Religion is like Opium" It seems a Third World problem that religion and politics is seen as two sides of a coin. Decision on the basis of religious priorities should not overtake the neutral nature of a Secular State.

Psychological Dimension

This stems from the fact that Good governance is gauged by comparing it with the governance of First World. Every State has a different back ground, particular problems, own history, own culture, own heritage, own people's taste, which results in parochial kind of governance systems. Capitalism economy is best suited for an advanced social and political system. But keeping in view the economic conditions of Third World countries, a poor economy can't meet the basic needs of people through capitalist set up. It needs a socialist mode where people are getting services at cheap or no price. Keeping in mind the limitation of a particular area shouldn't be compared with the level of their governance with that of advanced world's governance.

Conclusion

The questions of good governance is related to economically affected, politically unstable and socially backward societies. There are variances in meaning of Governance amongst liberals, neo-liberals, capitalists, socialists, communists thinkers. The form of government which provides security to its citizen, maintain rule of law, maintain, territorial security and delivery of services ranging from employment, education, health and food security, can be considered as good governance.

The problems/handles in the way of good governance in general are a) Ignorance of Law, b) Role of religion in politics, c) Capitalist economy, d) lack of Education, e) Strained centre State relations etc. The natures of problems in the Third world are different so are the solution. A common criterion for good governance can't be same in all countries.

Good governance is undoubtedly linked with the citizen's rights of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, which needs a stable political system, a strong state supported economy and a conscious population.