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'Good Governance': A Conceptual Analysis and Critical Overview

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Abstract

Governance refers to the process or function of exercising legitimate authority to regulate affairs of people in a given territory. It is the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented. Governance discourses emerged into Public Administration as a part of the discourses on development because bad governance or misgovernance has identified as the reason for underdevelopment. Good governance as an idea is the by-product of the agenda of international donor agencies like the World Bank and International Monetory Fund (IMF) which tries to change Public Administration into a market oriented administration. Good governance was defined by these donor agencies as the governance which is accountable, transparent, responsive, efficient, participatory and democratic. Though these agencies introduced these models as means to promote the market by downsizing government, this concept can be used in its true sense also. The application of the concept depends on the context into which it is applied. In the era of neo-liberal globalisation the idea of good governance was spread in the developing world, as most of the developing nations depend on the donor agencies for financial support. Thus good governance will be the engine for development in a liberalized economy.

Keywords: Good Governance; Development; Democracy; Civil Society; Globalisation.

Introduction

The concept of 'good govenance' has acquired crucial role in the contemporary Social Science discourse. Conceptualy 'governance' is not a new one, it is as old as human civilisation. Simply put 'governance' means the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has defined governance as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels comprising the mechanisms, process and institutions through which that authority is directed [1]. Governance has

wider meaning and implication than the term 'government'. Government refers to the machinery and institutional arrangements of exercising the sovereign power for serving the internal and external interests of the political community, whereas governance means the process as well as the result of making authoritative decisions for benefit of the society. It is a broader notion than government and regime. It is the interaction between formal institutions and those in Civil Society. To put it differently, 'governance' means the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented or not implemented.

Eventhough governance is an old concept, the issue

of governance and the state came into sharp focus after the World War II. At that time democracy was often reduced to the will of the majority. Gradually changes came in the ideas about the role of State, the prospects of people centred development, and the role of women and other marginalised groups in governance. Besides shifts in the power of interest groups like corporations, labour and Nongovernmental Organisations (NGOs) also made changes in the concept of 'governance'. Among all these, Globalistion - which promotes the aid and investment between countries, intensified trade and technological advancement - is the most important reason for changes in the feature of governance and public administration. The new theories like the New Public Administration (NPA), New Public Management (NPM), and the Public Choice School (PCS) demanded changes in managing public organisations. They aimed at the entrepreneurial role of public organisations with market oriented Public Administration. This new wave of thinking lead to the development of 'Good Governance'. With 'Good Governance', the administration shifted its focus from rule to result orientation, systems to enterprise, obedience to reward, inaction to action, centralisation to decentralisation and from the duties of administration to the rights of citizens.

Conceptualising Good Governance

Good governace refers to the dynamic process in public administration which needs proper rethinking and reformulations both at the level of administration and public. 'Good Governance' was for the first time used in the English language in the year 1628 [2]. The parameters of good governance are observed in Plato's 'Republic' and Kautilya's 'Arthashasthra'. The theory of 'Social Contract' expounded by Locke and Rousseau also stood for the good and proper social contract between the people and authority. But all these were restrictive in approach; good governance was guaranteed only to the 'vested interests' in society. Gradually the inclusion of 'citizenship' became important in governance and the good governance systems were created from this understanding. The Public Choice School, propounded by Vincent Ostrom, provided the theoretical basis to 'good governance' [3]. This theory gave the central position to individuals and the interests of individuals are important on ground of their capacity to participate in the conduct of public affairs looking at public interest. Besides, the theory believes in polycentric authority and that administration should be genuinely 'public'. The theories like New Public Administration and Development Administration also demanded it, and they gave a new face to Public Administration.

The new change in management of public organizations introduced the theory of 'New Public Management' which provides the foundation to good governance and has aimed at entrepreneurial role of public organisations with a market based public administration resulting in effectiveness and economy in the functioning of public organisations. The New Public Management focuses on management of performance appraisal and efficency. It deals with each other on a user pay basis. It also used quasi-market and contracting out to foster competition. It is a style of management which aims at cutting cost, reducing public expenditure incentives to increased performance and empowering managers. Thus to operationalize good government, the New Public Management is being considered as a vital point.

Good Governance is conceptually three dimensional. First it refers to certain espoused principles of public administration namely, accountability, transparency, and participation. Second, it dwells also on the processes in which political power is articulated and exercised. Governance also recognises the importance of interactions between State, market and Civil Society. Third, successful application of governance as both principles and processes, is contigent on the regulatory capacity of the State [4].

Good Governance became important as an issue for developing countries from the late 1980's onwards when two international funding agencies - The World Bank and The International Monetary Fund (IMF)- began to emphasis it. The concept of 'Good Governance' was highlighted in a World Bank Document (1989) [5] which states that improving governance would begin with emphasis on accountability, rule of law, openness and tranparency. The document considered the 'good governance' as sound development management. More recently in 1997, the World Bank argued for governance approach based on capability [6]. World Bank incorporated accountability, transparency and a strong focus on participation and rule of law into their governance approach. Thus governance is associated with efficeint and effective administration in a democratic framework.

The World Bank and IMF arrived in such conclusions in the light of the response to a series of crises faced in different parts of the world. The dominant view seemed to be that these crises were brought about not by external economic events or

natural calamities, but by failure of domestic governments to adopt right policies [7]. A number of pronouncements on governance, democracy and development flowed, which sought to establish their inter-relationships and inter-dependence. These were supported not only by all major developed countries but also by the main international development institutions, and a variety of cooperative, inter-governmental and regional organisations, such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the European Communities and the Commonwealth, as also by almost all aid giving agencies. India is the sole example of a Third World country, maintaining and emphasizing this relationship. The balance of payment crisis of 1991 (coupled with some sharp developments on the political front) led india to the acceptance of Washington consensus as economic policy [8]. The concept has come into vogue increasingly because of the studies of many developing countries relating to development and its total dependence on efficacy in maintaining the fact of 'goodness' in the governance. The aid agencies began to recognize its absence as a serious barrier to economic development of the developing countries, which is essential for their working. Thus the concept of 'good governance' has acquired increased importance, since 1990s.

Indicators of Good Governance

Governance has three major components: that of process, content and deliverables. The process of governance includes factors such as transparency and accountability. Content includes values such as justice and equity. A strong sense of responsiveness and commitment to serve the governed – the customer and client of government – would ensure efficient delivery of services to the people. So the good governance needed something more with these general components. Indicators (essential elements) have been fixed to evaluate the performance of governments. Yet these are all pertinent to central and state governemnts.

In its first report written expressly on the topic of governance, Governance and Development(1992) [9], the World Bank reiterates its belief that good governance must go along with sound economic policies. As described in the 1994 report 'Governance: The World Bank's Experience' [10], 'good governance' is epitomized by predictable, open and enlightened policy making (that is, transparent processes); a bureaucracy imbued with a professional

ethos; an executive arm of government accountable for its actions; and a strong civil society participating in public affairs; and all behaving under the rule of law. All these allows a responsible, economic and financial management of public and natural resources, for the purpose of economic growth, social development and poverty reduction in an equitable and sustainable manner, with the use of clear participatory procedures for public decision making, transparent and accountable institutions, primacy of law in the management and distribution of resources, effective measures to prevent and combat corruption, support for leadership development and empowerment of men and women.

In another sense, Good governance is equivalent to purposive and development oriented administration which is committed to improvement in quality of life of the people. In this sense Good governance is linked to development in three ways. First, it is essentially democratic, and is concerned with legitimacy, accountability, and human rights goals. Second, because of its focus on effectiveness and efficiency, good governanece is less concerned with the form of government, and more with the ability to govern. In the third sense, good governance as coordination sees order as the resultant of the actions and interactions of formally constituted governments, the corporate and civil society organisations. In short, good governance is associated with efficient and effective, legitimate and accountable administration in a democratic network through better management of human and material resources to attain maximum growth and development and for the protection of human rights. It is claimed that the meaning of good governance for a common man is guaranteed to health, adequate housing and sufficient food, quality of education, fair justice and personal security. The basic purpose of good governance is not only to provide basic amenities to the people but a life, which is qualitative and dignified in the real sense of the term.

The World Bank has laid great stress on State of Governance since there is a link between growth and good governance. World Bank has developed six indicators of governance. These indicators are; voice and accountability, political stability and nonviolence, government effectiveness, rule of law, regulatory quality and control of corruption. Thus by incorporating the view of UNDP and World Bank, the elements or indicators of good governance are recognized as: Participation, Transparency, Responsiveness, Accountability, Legitimacy, Partnership, Rule of Law, Equity and inclusiveness, Effectiveness and Efficiency, Strategic vision, Resource prudence, Ecological prudence, Consensus orientation

and Spatial grounding in communities. These elements have to be built into a corruption free administration to provide good governance to the people.

Good governance demands for rule of law which established legal framework that shoud be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights. The law should also afford vulnerable groups' protection against exploitation and abuse. Good governance also demands that government must be not only representative but also responsive to the needs of governed. Thus it is participatory, transparent, accountable, efficient, effective and equitable. It promotes rule of law and ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society. It ensures that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision making. Good governance provides moral and political legitimacy, apart from constitutional validity, and credibility to the goals as well as instrumentaities of government. While discussing the indicators of good governance, it is necessary to have a better understanding of the concept of 'good governance' for which we have to analyse the relationship between good governance and the concepts like democracy, civil society and globalisation.

A. Democracy and Good Governance

Writers like Asha Kaushik [11] interpret 'good governance' as 'democratic governance'. Analytically governance and democracy are too close but separate phenomena. Much of the efforts, for good governance in developing countries started being linked with democracy. Efforts to create on enabling environment and to build capacities will be wasted if the political context is not favourable. Ultimately, better governance requires political renewal with legitimacy. Good governance efforts have to be oriented to the search for new governance tools, new practices, forms of organisation and goals and bases of conferring legitimacy. It implies a democratic administration opening towards different stakeholders who are interested in solving specific problems of the local, national and global levels, to ensure social justice, inclusion, and empowerment. The task of deepening democracy is linked to the normative, and is essential for sustainability and development. Sustainable development requires a positive interaction between economic and political progress. This connection is so fundamental that participating development and good governance are central concerns in the allocation and design of development assistance. Economic efficiency and growth, on the one hand, and governance and democratization on the other, are now seen as mutually reinforcing processes. If the good governance is measured only through the lens of economic efficiency and sustainable growth, a country can't qualify for 'good governance', because it may fail woefully in its efforts at political liberalization and human rights.

The traditional meaning of democracy as the government of, by and for the people has changed. Now discussions are going on the new concepts of democracy like deliberative, associative democracy and so on. Good governance demands a substantive democracy which includes a democratic culture and society, unlike that of a procedural democracy. 'Democracy' became the new political conditionality for the distribution of both bilateral and multilateral assistance. Today good governance is firmly tied to democracy and donor agencies emphasis the need to create a more facilitative socio-political context in the developing world. Citizen's participation, accountable government, and just and effective judicial systems prevent political instability that hinders growth and development. This notion has formed the basis for aid allocation by most donors and has expanded the development assistance debate to include the political dimension of governance.

Human Development Report 2002 elaborates the concept of 'Democratic Governance' [12].

Like the concept of good governance, Democratic Governance seeks efficient institutions, and a predictable economic and political environment necessary for economic growth and effective functioning of public services. But the concept of democratic governance concerns political freedom and human rights and removal of discrimination as central objectives. Democratic Governance thus incorporates into the notion of good governance for development, democratic processes and institutions, and a concern with the securing of political and civil rights and freedom on human rights. Thus, Democratic Governance differs from the concept of Good Governance in recognizing that political and civil freedom and participation have basic value as developmental ends in themselves and not just means of achieving socio-economic progress [13].

Democracy with decentralization and people's participation is the main acquirement of good governance. Unless the systems of governance consciously recognize systems and practices of marginalised communities, it cannot be termed as 'good governance'. Simply, democracy with deep and strong participation of people is essential for good governance; and good governance is essential for

smooth working of a democratic system. For the realization of the goals of governance it is necessary to maintain a suitable form of equilibrium of the three; democracy, governance and administration [14]. It also suggests that till eighties, there was only internal or regional pressure to increase the area of governance. But now irresistibly greater pressure on developing nations is coming from outside [15].

B. Civil Society [16] and Good Governance

Many scholars termed 'good governance' as cooperation between government and civil society. Civil society refers to a realm of autonomous groups and associations, political parties, business groups, interest groups, NGOs, clubs, families and so on. In other words, it is the immediate realm situated between state and citizen, populated by organized groups or associations, which are separte from state, enjoy some autonomy in relations with the state, and are formed voluntarily by members in society to protect or extend their interests values or identities. In the era of privatization, globalization, free market, outsourcing of labour and capital, structural adjustment, decentralization, restructuring, deregulation, sustainable development, empowerment etc., formulation and implementation of public policy (policy that benefits the public) seem to be increasingly delegated to or undertaken by nongovernmental institutions [17]. Therefore, Civil Society Organizations (CSO) are, usually, working at local, national and international level.

As a matter of public policy and decision making Civil Society Organisations can play an important role in mobilizing people to participate in politics and public affairs. In other words, CSOs may mobilize citizens to pressure governments into implementing existing legislation and by taking action to indict pubic officials involved in corruption. Thus, they can help poor and socially disadvantaged groups to gain awareness about administration and to particiapte in them. In short, the CSOs can contribute to better governance by improving transparency and increasing the availability of information about the making and implementation of state policies and laws. Thus it is basically social counterpart of the political institutions [18]. By mediating between the State and the citizens in democratic societies, the CSOs functions as the third sector of democracy.

For the promotion of good governance, the citizens should be active in public matters. For that citizens need to be motivated, skilled and informed. But such benefits were attained by certain elite groups only; the poor and marginalzed people, without the means

or capacities were often excluded. To solve this problem, grass root NGOs, movements and, in some places the government itself have started making efforts to help poor people to access information. The quality and effectiveness of public services and expenditures are integral to good governance. CSOs can contribute by working directly with government in shaping, financing and devlivering public services in a variety of ways. These can take the form of publicprivate partnership in which CSOs work closely with State institutions in designing and providing health and educational services by mobilizing funds from client groups and other sources by providing services directly and by monitoring quality and coverage. Thus, the wider connotation and the use of the term 'governance' reflects a blurring of the distinction between the state and the 'civil society' leading to the view that civil society determines the principles for interaction in the populace, not just the government, including the empowerment process and linkages [19].

With the strengthening of civil society, local form of power had constituted new definition for development. In the prevailing development discourse, civil society and market, increasingly find important roles as partners of the state. Some argue that development and governance are not possible without an active participation of these actors. In developing countries like India, the state machinery continues to be relevant in the process of development and empowerment. Thus the role of the CSOs is to supplement and complement the state and not substitute it. They have to make the state more accountable and responsible.

Nevertheless, all these arguments were criticised by many. The political Left views that CSOs are important without confusion, but the fact remains that most of them are institutions of the middle class, not of the poor. As an essential middle class entity, the civil society's mindset is influenced by the market economy [20]. With commercialization, the middle class relates to most things in life, including relationships and institutions, as services and commodities. They consider the state as a service provider. Thus the civil society perception of good governance is often limited to that of an ideal environment in which the state provides services efficiently, or enables others to do so. Not all CSOs promote better governance. Some trying to protect their self interest and to undermine good governance. Leaders of some CSOs representing groups that benefit from unfair government practices, may not wish to see government improve in these ways. Many CSOs have been criticised for being unelected, unaccountable and non-transperent about their finance and decision making.

However, there is a growing consensus that civil society can constructively engage in political life by helping to foster fairer, more honest, transparent, democratic and accountable governement that is most tolerant of diversity and pluralism. Through lobbying and appealing they can pressure the governments to improve performance. They can encourage the government by practicing good governance themeselves, within their own organzations.

In doing so, they usually help to strengthen state legitimacy and relations of trust between public officials and ordinary citizens. In other words, from the neoliberal perspective, governance is 'good governance' if it facilitates profit making. The neoliberals consider the good governance as a technocratic exercise aimed of harmonizing the actions of the state, civil society and market; but never tried to mobilize the common people to evolve in public affairs for public interest. The neo-liberalists support good governance for their own interest, not for the interest of the 'public'.

C. Globalisation and Good Governance

The scope of 'governance' had widened sharply with the Globalisation. For Globalisation 'good governance' means transparent, accountable and individual oriented governance. It stands for withdrawal of state control over market and individual.

Globalisation mainly influences the economic decision-making, in national and international level because, economic policies of nations increasingly influenced by global financial markets that are inherently unstable. During the 1990s, to create a favorable environment for economic growth the World Bank and IMF compelled many beneficiary governments to accept certain reforms.

These reforms were collectively called Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) and its directives were aimed at market supremacy, more efficient use of public resources and cut in fiscal deficit, thereby indirectly addressing those issues of governance which affect the management of resources. SAP is one of the mechanisms for mainstreaming good governance in the neo-liberal paradigm. Negating the centrality of the state in economic and social development, Structural Adjustment Programme mandates reforms in the bureaucracy and governance systems to ensure developments and social security. SAP considered the state only as a

'facilitator'. But many are criticizing the SAP by saying that the application of the same set of policies across the nations is not acceptable. The nations and societies are different to each other. What is considered 'good' for one section of people may not be necessarily good for others.

The neoliberal actors like World Bank and IMF suggest dismantling of state monopolies that provide public goods, particularly infrastructure and social services. They insist that governments should network policies and compel the public sector to face competition from the private sector.

According to such institutions, in order to achieve good governance the government should function with an experimental mentality. Also, CSOs have a major role to play in revitalizing public institutions. These directives stem from the belief that markets are reliable agencies not only for economic growth, but also for social developments, provisioning of public services and combating poverty. From the neo-liberal perspective governance is 'good governance' if it facilitates profit making. It considers good governance as a technocratic exercise aimed at harmonizing the actions of the state, civil society and market. That means, the Globalsation supports the concept of 'good governance' only in theoretical base; but in practical level it failed to accept 'good governance' in its real sense. Besides, when the donor agencies and neoliberals consider the state only as a 'faclilitator' and thus the sovereignty of the state is in crisis.

Critics argue that globalisation also undermines democracy. Because globalisation has concentrated on economic power, and therefore, political power in developing countries is under, the indirect control of Multi National Corporations (MNCs) and donor agencies like World Bank and IMF. The fact is that globalisation has pronounced neoliberal or free-market ideological character. By demanding liberalization and privatization, the donor agencies exploit the developing and underdeveloped nations directly and indirectly. Economic lilberalization and integration had led to greater income inequality within countries without strong welfare states as the incomes of increasingly demanded skilled workers rise while those of unskilled labours drop [21].

There raised the problem of unemployment, poverty and environmental degradation. The social movements launched by various NGOs such as Greenpeace and Oxfam are reaction against the bad effects of globalisation. This means that economic globalisation leads to political and cultural globalisation which is the root cause of neo-imperialism and neo-colonialism.

Critical Perspectives

Public Administration today reflects, in large part, the changing nature of the practice of governments especially in the developed world. The practices of traditional Pulic Administration have been increasingly under attack from neo liberal economists, interest group theorists, and rational choice scholars, who have provided the intellectual inputs to the politicians determined to reduce the size and scope of the public sector [22].

Therefore, critics defined 'good governance' as the process of enriching the rich and impoverishing the poor.

Public Administration with transparency, accountability, responsiveness, and participation of people stands for 'good governance'. Good governance is different for the market, civil society and democracy. In a democracy, there exist a close relation between people and state. For the common people, good governance would be something that ensures their basic needs; and their expectation would be state centric. The democratic set up is more adequate for good governance.

Some critics defined the 'good governance' as a tool for controlling and exploiting the developing countries by the donor agencies and developed countries as it encompasses social, economic, political and administrative policies and practices. Cynthia Hewitt de Alcantara points out that by giving the concept of governance an important place, international lending agencies could escape from the intellectual and practical dead-end that they were faced by their extreme reliance on free market ideals which had degenerated into economism [23]. The concept of governance allowed for the retreat from economism and for the consideration of important social and political issues relevant for economic development.

D. Bandopadhayay, sees the manner in which good governance has been presented by donor agenceis to seek changes in the systems of governance in the Third World as nothing short of recolonisation [24]. He finds fault with the manner in which transnational corporations are left out of the effort to bring goodness in their governance.

This aspect was again underlined by Joseph E. Stiglitz, when he has criticised the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and particularly the IMF, for some of the problems of globalisation and suggested that for managing globalisation well these international institutions need to be reformed [25].

Conclusion

Governance is all about responsiveness of a State towards its citizens which means that a well govrned State is a State which is responsive to the societal problems. Though they are not new concepts, the terms 'Governance' and 'Good Governance' have recently come to occupy an important place in development literature and discourse. In the present global scenario, Public Administration is more result oriented than rule oriented. 'Good Governance' is a conept advocated by the major International donors / financial agencies. They share the view that better quality of governance would promote development. Thus the concept of 'good governance' is used by the advocates of free-market economy to enhance their exploitation which is possible through the promotion of ideas like transparency, openness and the minimal state helps free flow of goods and services. The proponents of 'Good Governance' argue that 'Good Governance' gives importance to legitimate and accountable government, rule of law, protection of human rights and sustainable development. To them, 'good governance' is human governance, i.e., it provides security, delivers rights and promotes sustainable human development. For attaining this aim, people's participation in decision making is necessary. Besides, the objective of 'good governance' is to create an environment in which public servants and politicians in governments are in a position to respond to the challenges of governance. That challenge involves a notion of duty, vocation and services to the public, as well as the caring responsibility for their welfare. And it strengthens the values of liberal democracy. The concept of service also creates a shared feeling or spirit of public duty among those who govern and thus making governments more accountable democratic and participatory. In this perspective the basic challenge of the concept of 'good governance' is to motivate people in government affairs so that they can make full contribution of their capabilities in serving their nation and community. Therefore, it is imperative to continue the discussion on good governance in the context of decentralization and people's participation.

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