



Good Governance

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What is Good Governance?

- ‘Governance’ is 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.
- In the 1992 report entitled “Governance and Development”, the World Bank set out its definition of Good Governance. It defined Good Governance as **“the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country’s economic and social resources for development”**.
 - Good governance has 8 major characteristics. ‘It is **participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law**.’
 - It assures that corruption is minimized, the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making.
 - It is also responsive to the present and future needs of society.

8 Principles of Good Governance By United Nations



- **Participation:**
 - People should be able to voice their own opinions through legitimate immediate organizations or representatives.
 - This includes men and women, vulnerable sections of society, backward classes, minorities, etc.
 - Participation also implies freedom of association and expression.
- **Rule of Law:**
 - Legal framework should be enforced impartially, especially on human rights laws.
 - Without rule of law, politics will follow the principle of matsya nyaya ie law of fish which means the strong will prevail over the weak.
- **Consensus Oriented:**
 - Consensus oriented decision-making ensures that even if everyone does not achieve what they want to the fullest, a common minimum can be achieved by everyone which will not be detrimental to anyone.
 - It mediates differing interests to meet the broad consensus on the best interests of a community.
- **Equity and Inclusiveness:**
 - Good governance assures an equitable society.
 - People should have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being.
- **Effectiveness and Efficiency:**
 - Processes and institutions should be able to produce results that meet the needs of their community.
 - Resources of the community should be used effectively for the maximum output.
- **Accountability:**
 - Good governance aims towards betterment of people, and this can not take place without the government being accountable to the people.
 - Governmental institutions, private sectors, and civil society organizations should be held accountable to the public and institutional stakeholders.
- **Transparency:**
 - Information should be accessible to the public and should be understandable and monitored.
 - It also means free media and access of information to them.
- **Responsiveness:**
 - Institutions and processes should serve all stakeholders in a reasonable period of time.

References of Good Governance

- Bhagavad Gita provides numerous cues for good governance, leadership, dutifulness and self-realization which are re-interpreted in the modern context.

- In Kautilya's Arthashastra (2nd-3rd century BC), the welfare of people was considered paramount in the role of King. Mahatma Gandhi emphasized "su-raaj" which essentially means good governance.
- Importance of governance is clearly inscribed in Indian Constitution which is built on-premise of Sovereign, Socialist, Secular and Democratic Republic committing itself to democracy, rule of law and welfare of people.
- Under Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 16 can be considered to be directly linked as it is dedicated to improvement in governance, inclusion, participation, rights, and security.
- According to former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, "Good governance is ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law; strengthening democracy; promoting transparency and capacity in public administration." He also said that "Good Governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development".

Initiatives for Good Governance in India

Right to Information

- As a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), India is under an international obligation to effectively guarantee citizens the Right to Information as per Article 19 of the ICCPR.
- RTI Act, 2005 marks a significant shift in Indian democracy. It gives greater access of the citizen to the information which in turn improves the responsiveness of the government to community needs.
- The right to information, promotes openness, transparency and accountability in administration by making the government more open to public scrutiny.

E-Governance

- The National e-Governance Plan envisions to make all government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency & reliability of such services at affordable costs.
- **E-Governance** effectively delivers better programming and services in the era of newly emerging information and communication technologies (ICTs), which herald new opportunities for rapid social and economic transformation worldwide.

- E-Governance has a direct impact on its citizens who derive benefits through direct transactions with the services offered by the government.

Programs launched under e-Governance: **Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation** (PRAGATI), Digital India Program, MCA21 (to improve the speed and certainty in the delivery of the services of Ministry of Company Affairs), Passport Seva Kendra (PSK), online Income tax return, etc.

- Focus on '**Minimum Government, Maximum Governance**'.

Legal Reforms

- The Central Government has scrapped nearly 1,500 obsolete rules and laws with an aim to bring about transparency and improve efficiency.
- Reform criminal justice and procedural laws with focus on pre-institution mediation.

Ease of Doing Business

- Steps were taken by the government to improve business conditions including legislation meant to improve the country's business environment and policy ecosystems (such as the Bankruptcy Code, the Goods and Services Tax or GST, and the anti-money-laundering law).
- Government has launched the '**Make in India**' initiative.

Decentralization

- Centralised Planning Commission was abolished, replacing it with the think tank called the **National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog)**, which would usher in an era of "**cooperative federalism**".
- 14th Finance Commission increased the tax devolution of the divisible pool to states from 32% to 42% for years 2015 to 2020. It provides more freedom to states to initiate schemes based on local factors.

Police Reforms

- Modernizing police forces and implementing the **Model Police Act of 2015**.
- Reform of the First Information Report (FIR) lodging mechanism, including introducing filing e-FIRs for minor offences.
- Launch a common nation-wide emergency number to attend to emergency security needs of citizens.

Aspirational Districts Programme

- The **Aspirational Districts Programme** (ADP) was launched in January 2018 to transform the lives of people in the under-developed areas of the country in a time bound manner.

- Anchored in NITI Aayog, the programme is aimed at transforming 115 most backward districts with focused interventions in the field of health and nutrition, education, agriculture and water management, financial inclusion and skill development.

Good Governance Index

- The **Good Governance Index** Was launched on the occasion of Good Governance Day on 25 December 2019.
- The Good Governance Index is a uniform tool across States to assess the Status of Governance and impact of various interventions taken up by the State Government and Union Territories.
- The objectives of Good Governance Index are to provide quantifiable data to compare the state of governance in all states and Union Territories, enable states and Union Territories to formulate and implement suitable strategies for improving governance and shift to result oriented approaches and administration.

Challenges to Good Governance

Criminalization of Politics

- According to the Association of Democratic Reforms, 43% of Members of Parliaments of Lok Sabha 2019 are facing criminal charges. It is a 26% increase as compared to 2014.
- The criminalisation of the political process and the unholy nexus between politicians, civil servants, and business houses are having a baneful influence on public policy formulation and governance.
- The political class as such is losing respect. Therefore, it is necessary to amend **Section 8 of the Representation of the People's Act 1951** to disqualify a person against whom the criminal charges that relate to grave and heinous offenses and corruption are pending.

Corruption

- Corruption is a major obstacle in improving the quality of governance. While human greed is obviously a driver of corruption, it is the structural incentives and poor enforcement system to punish the corrupt that have contributed to the rising curve of graft in India.
- According to the Corruption Perception Index - 2019 (released by Transparency International, India's ranking has slipped from 78 to 80.

Gender Disparity

- **According to Swami Vivekananda**, “it is impossible to think about the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing”.
- One way to assess the state of the nation is to study the status of its women. As women comprise almost 50% of the population it is unfair that they are not adequately represented in government institutions and other allied sectors.
- Therefore, in order to ensure good governance it is essential to ensure the empowerment of women.

Growing incidence of violence

Resorting to illegal force is considered to be a law and order problem. But when one looks at it from the point of view of the principles of Good Governance, it becomes clear that peace and order is the first step to development.

Delay in Justice

A citizen has the right to avail timely justice, but there are several factors, because of that a common man doesn't get timely justice.

Centralisation of Administrative System

Governments at lower levels can only function efficiently if they are empowered to do so. This is particularly relevant for the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), which currently suffer from inadequate devolution of funds as well as functionaries to carry out the functions constitutionally assigned to them.

Marginalization of Socially and Economically Backward People

The socially and economically backward sections of the society have always been marginalised in the process of development. Although there are constitutional provisions for their upliftment but in practice, they are lagging behind in so many areas like education, economic well being etc.

Conclusion

- The effective functioning of governance is the prime concern of every citizen of the country. The citizens are ready to pay the price for good services offered by the state, but what is required is a transparent, accountable and intelligible governance system absolutely free from bias and prejudices.
- There is a need to reformulate our national strategy to accord primacy to the Gandhian principle of ‘Antyodaya’ to restore good governance in the country.
- India should also focus on developing probity in governance, which will make the governance more ethical.

- The government should continue to work on the ideals of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas and Sabka Vishwas which will lead to inclusive and sustainable development.

Probity in Governance

- Probity is a quality of having strong moral principles. It includes having integrity, uprightness, and honesty. It is not just being incorruptible and honest but also includes strict adherence to a code of ethics. For an effective system of governance and for socio-economic development, probity is essential.
- Philosophical basis of governance and probity:
 - The ethical concern of governance has been given in both eastern and western literature like Bhagavad Gita, Arthashastra, by Confucius, Plato, Mill, etc.
 - Administrators are the guardians of the Administrative State so they should honor public trust.
 - Max Weber: He said that it rationality that members of administrative staff should not own means of production.
- Objective of probity in governance:
 - To ensure accountability in governance
 - To maintain integrity in Public Service
 - To ensure compliance with the process
 - To preserve public confidence in Govt process
 - To avoid the potential for misconduct, fraud, and corruption