Good Governance – Principles and Initiatives - Challenges and Impact on Society

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In this article, an attempt is made about Good Governance and examine its major principles, features, initiatives and the challenges towards achieving good governance in India along with its impact on society.

Introduction

Governance, as per the 12th Five Year Plan, is the management of all such processes that, in any society, define the environment which permits and enables individuals to raise their capability levels, on the one hand, and provide opportunities to realise their potential and enlarge the set of available choices, on the other. Where governance can be both good and bad, good governance is the responsible conduct of public affairs and management of public resources. It remains the key to a corruption free country and realizing the dream of an inclusive society.

What is Good Governance?

Eight key attributes can characterize good governance. These include being participatory, consensus-driven, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective, efficient, equitable, and inclusive while adhering to the rule of law. This framework ensures the reduction of corruption, consideration of minority perspectives, and the inclusion of the voices of the most disadvantaged members of society in decision-making processes. Additionally, good governance is attuned to both current and future societal needs.

History of Good Governance

The World Bank, in 1992, in its Report 'Governance and Development', defined Good Governance as "The manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's

economic and social resources for development." The concept of Good Governance is not new to Indian Society. In ancient India, the King was bound by 'Rajadharma'. Even epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana speak of principles of Good Governance followed by the king. Good Governance, thus, remains the key to a participatory form of government wherein those called upon to rule on behalf of the people are driven by a desire to give their all to make their lives more livable.

Principles of Good Governance

A Model Code of Governance, drafted by a Committee of Chief Secretaries, lays out the principles of good governance and aims to establish standards for states to use in assessing their own performance on various topics:

1. Improving service delivery

2. Developing programs for weaker sections and backward areas

3. Technology and system improvement

4. Financial management and budget sanctity

5. Accountability and transparency

6. Public service morale & anti- corruption measures and

7. Incentivising reforms

Features of Good Governance

The Features of Good Governance are:

a. Provision of good education facilities that offer greater employability

b. Infrastructure development like Roads, Railways and Telecommunications etc.,

c. Ensuring the safety of public life as well as property

d. Provision of citizen centric services

e. Reducing inequalities in society

f. Enlarging the sphere of freedom of speech and expression, religion and employment

g. Creating a healthy business environment

h. Maintaining law and order

    i.   Providing choices to the vulnerable sections of the population to lead a dignified life

Stakeholders of Good Governance

The stakeholders involved in ensuring good governance are:

a. **State**- It comprises the different organs of the Government, such as Legislature, Judiciary as well as the Executive. It also comprises other actors like Political Executives and Bureaucracy.

b. **Market**- It includes the corporate sector, the organised as well as the unorganised, ranging from large corporate houses to small scale businesses.

c. **Civil society**- It includes NGOs, pressure groups, trade associations, and media associations.

Principles of Good Governance

The 8 Good Governance principles ensure that every individual has a rightful say in the decision making and the government is responsive to the present as well as the future needs of the society.

The principles of good governance are:

1. **Participation:** Participation remains the key cornerstone of good governance. It can be ensured directly or through some intermediate institutions. It provides an opportunity to every individual to voice their opinion in the decisions of the government.

2. **Transparency:** The principle of transparency ensures that everyone equally accesses information related to policy decisions. It also means that not only is the information accessible, but it is also provided in an easily understandable form through accessible media.

3. **Rule of law:** The rule of law implies that the legal framework in the country is enforced impartially. It also means protecting the rights of the vulnerable sections of the population.

4. **Accountability:** Accountability is the answerability of the government for its decisions. It facilitates the responsibility of the government to the public. Not only the government but civil society and corporate groups, too should be accountable to the public.

5. **Responsiveness:** The principle of responsiveness ensures that the services of government and institutions are available to the public within a reasonable time frame.

6. **Consensus oriented:** It ensures that the decisions arrived at take into account the interests of every stakeholder in the society. This ensures that everyone accepts the decision and is in the best interest of the whole community.

7. **Equity and inclusiveness:** Good governance should ensure justice, be it in terms of political, economic or social, for the community. It strives to bring about an inclusive society where everyone has the opportunity to climb the ladder of growth.

8. **Effectiveness and efficiency:** Good governance ensures that the processes and institutions produce results which meet the needs of the society by ensuring optimal utilisation of the available resources.

Good Governance Day

Good Governance Day, also termed as Susasan Diwas, is celebrated annually on 25 December, the birth anniversary of the late Prime Minister Sri Atal BIhari Vajpayee, with a view to enhance accountability in the government. Its observance began in 2014.

Good Governance Index 2021

The good governance index is a comprehensive tool that seeks to assess the status of governance in the states and the impact of various interventions by the governments. It was launched in 2019 and is prepared by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions. It takes into consideration 10 sectors which are further measured on a total of 58 indicators. These indicators are given different weightage to arrive at the value. In the Good Governance Index

2021, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Goa were ranked the highest i.e 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively.

Good Governance initiatives of Telangana

Telangana is the youngest state in the country and the Government of Telangana has embarked on implementation of various e-Governance initiatives, to help citizens gain one-stop access to information and services in a secure way and to provide better, efficient, transparent and responsive services, leveraging Information & Communication Technology tools (ICT).

Centre for Good Governance (CGG)

The Centre for Good Governance (CGG) was established in October 2001 by then the Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP) in collaboration with the Department for International Development (DFID) and the World Bank to help it achieve the State's goal of Transforming Governance. CGG undertakes action research, provides professional advice, and conducts Change management programmes for government departments and agencies to enable successful implementation of their reform agenda. CGG works closely with policy-makers like Ministers, senior officials, management experts, institutions and other stakeholders, especially citizens towards building people-centric governance practices.

e-Governance Projects

The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) serves as the guiding document for creation of the right governance and institutional mechanisms, setting up the core infrastructure, policies and implementation of a number of Mission Mode Projects at the Centre/ State and integrated service levels for e-Governance in the State of Telangana.

Government Order Issue Register (GOIR): The Information Technology, Electronics & Communications Department (IT, E&C) facilitates all the other Government Departments to upload their Government Orders (Ms and Rt) through Online Government Order Issue

Register (GOIR) Portal to make them available to citizens. The GO(s) can be accessed and downloaded through the portal anywhere, anytime.

eOffice Project: e-File is a workflow based system that includes the features of existing manual   handling of files in addition to the more efficient electronic mode. This system involves all stages,   including the diarisation of inward receipts, creation of files, movement of receipts and files and finally the archival of records. With this system, the movement of receipts and files become seamless and there is more transparency in the system since each and every action taken on a file is recorded electronically.

eTaal: A web portal for dissemination of e-transaction statistics of National and State level e-Governance projects including Mission Mode Projects. It receives transaction statistics from web
based applications periodically on near real-time basis. eTaal presents quick analysis of transaction counts in tabular and graphical form to give quick view of transactions done by various e-Governance projects.

Government e Marketplace (GeM): Facilitates online procurement of common use Goods & Services required by various Government Departments/ Organizations/ PSUs. GeM aims to enhance transparency, efficiency and speed in public procurement. It provides the tools of e- bidding, reverse e-auction and demand aggregation to facilitate the government users, achieve the best value for their money.

eProcurement: The Government e-Procurement Platform is robust, efficient, transparent, economical, and significantly reduces the time to process the tenders. It involves activities related to evaluating and selecting suppliers, such as e-Tenders and e-Auctions. Purchase Control offers everything the department needs to successfully execute e-procurement. Besides, it removes routine tasks from the procurement wing of the department so that they can focus on more important tasks like negotiating contract terms to the advantage of the Government.

The e-Procurement platform being utilized by all the Departments of Telangana Govt. including urban and rural local bodies along with their vendors, Cooperative Sectors, Public Sector Undertakings and other State Governments.

DigiLocker: DigiLocker aims at 'Digital Empowerment' of citizen by providing access to authentic digital documents to citizen's digital document wallet. The issued documents in DigiLocker system are deemed to be at par with original physical documents as per Rule 9A of the Information Technology (Preservation and Retention of Information by Intermediaries providing Digital Locker facilities) Rules, 2016.

Electronic Service Delivery (ESD) is a key pillar of Telangana State's e-Governance vision and initiatives. ESD has facilitated delivery of Government to Citizen (G2C), Government to Business (G2B) and Business to Citizen (B2C) services to every corner of the State using ICT in an accountable, transparent and innovative manner.

MeeSeva has been envisioned to bring public services closer to the citizens and enable 'Anywhere, Anytime' access to citizen-centric services through multiple platforms and modes. It was launched in 2011 and has emerged as the primary mode for electronic delivery of G2C and G2B services. Eseva/MeeSeva is one of the most successful e-governance projects and is replicated by many other State Government Departments.

Smart Governance is a key focus area of ITE&C Department. In this regard, ESD has been adopting emerging technologies like Big Data, AI, ML, etc., for re-engineering processes involved in effetive delivery of G2C, G2B and G2G services to the citizens.

Major Initiatives

T-App Folio

ESD has implemented one of its kind m-Governance initiatives, T-App Folio, which enables delivery of G2C, B2C, VAS, and info services. T App can be accessed on Smart phones (App, Mobile Web) as well as feature phones (USSD, IVRS, and SMS). T-App Folio is also the only App in India that currently enables application and certificate services to be

delivered to citizens. T-App Folio was launched in February 2018 and the app has clocked more than 12 lakh downloads. It records close to 7,000 transactions a day. T App Folio currently hosts over 270 services from over 32 participating departments.

T-Wallet

T-Wallet is the official digital wallet of Telangana State, launched on 1st June, 2017. It is the first digital wallet owned by any State Government in India. It has an Anytime Anywhere digital payment option for everyone. It serves Online (Desktop, Laptop), Smart Phone, Feature Phone and even offline. T-Wallet has been integrated with the services of SC Development Dept., Labour Dept., Traffic Police, Streenidhi, TSRTC, CDMA, Vijaya Dairy, Civil Supplies, JNTU, among other Government entities.

Real-time Digital Authentication of Identity (RTDAI)

RTDAI enables a document-less, presence-less governance mechanism using Big Data, AI, ML, etc. wherein the quality of Government Departments' interaction with citizens can be significantly improved.

Pensioner's Life Certificate through Selfie (PLCS)

PLCS is the first use case of RTDAI and has been launched in April, 2019. The solution eliminates the need for pensioners to visit the authorized physical offices to submit the proof of life certificate

RTA FEST

Through Friendly Electronic Services of Transport (FEST), launched in July, 2020, the citizens of Telangana can avail numerous services of the Transport Department through a Smartphone from their home, anytime, anywhere, without physically visiting the RTA office. Except for services where a driving test or physical inspection of the vehicle is required, all services would be offered in a contactless and presence-less manner through FEST.

Degree Online Services, Telangana (DOST)

Leveraging RTDAI, authentication of students for admission into Degree Programs of the State was made completely online through DOST Authentication service. This ensured that the students could complete the authentication process without stepping out during the Covid-19 pandemic. The DOST authentication process has been continued to be implemented for the Degree Admissions.

Samagra Vedika

Samagra Vedika, a smart Governance solution that uses Emerging Technologies such as Big Data and ML, integrates the Govt. databases for informed decision making. It ensures proper delivery of subsidies and increase in revenues for Government departments. Owing to its utility and potential, Samagra Vedika was mentioned in the Economic Survey of India, 2019 presented in the Parliament.

Telangana State Technology Services (TSTS) is the 'Nodal Agency' for e Governance initiatives including Hardware and Software procurement for all departments of Telangana. TSTS handles major Mission Mode Projects for the state like State Data Centre (SDC), State Wide Area Network (SWAN), Video Conferencing (VC) and Secretariat Campus Area Network (SCAN). TSTS manages the e-Procurement portal and funds, and acts as the fund manager for all IT,E&C department's budget funds.

Major e-Governance Solutions

Dharani Portal

In co-ordination with CCLA, IGRS Department, TSTS is the nodal agency to provide complete technical support for Dharani, a Telangana government's initiative to implement new and completely IT driven Integrated Land Records System.

AUA-ASA Project

TSTS has launched authentication services as Authentication User Agencies (AUAs) to all the Government Departments by using Aadhaar from August, 2017. ABAS reached a big

milestone of 10,00,000 authentications per day and the services are being used by 28 Departments of Telangana Government.

Other major initiatives include:

1. Telangana State Building Permission Approval and Self-Certification System (TS bPASS),

2. Telangana State Industrial Project Approval and Self Certification System (TS-iPASS),

3. Telangana State Academy for Skill and Knowledge (TASK)

Some of the Policies implemented by the Government of India towards achieving Good Governance are:

Right to Information (RTI)

The right to information stems from the basic right to free expression guaranteed by Article 19 which empowers all the citizens with the right to freedom of speech and expression. Under this act, an individual can inspect, audit, evaluate, and analyze government activities and decisions to verify that they are in accordance with the principles of public interest, integrity and justice. This ensures the responsiveness of the government to the needs of the community. Thus, the act fosters openness, transparency, and accountability in administration by making the government available to public scrutiny.

MCA21

It is an online portal launched by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs to streamline the processes of businesses. It serves as a single window platform for accessing various information as well as electronic filing of various documents.

Citizen Charter

The Citizen Charter is a voluntary declaration by the service providers with respect to the services delivered and their standards, choice, accessibility, non-discrimination, openness,

and accountability. It brings in much needed transparency as to what an individual can expect from the institutions and principles under which the services are offered.

UMANG App

Developed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and National eGovernance Division, the UMANG App serves as a single platform to access PAN India e-services of the Government. It brings together major government services on a single mobile app so as to enable the accessibility of government services on mobile phones of citizens.

Need of Good Governance

To realize the goals set out in the constitution not only in letter but in spirit calls for the need for Good Governance. The importance of Good Governance is:

Economic Justice

To reduce the inequalities prevalent in society, good governance remains the key. Also, the growth of the economy cannot be achieved with the prevalence of weak administration. Thus, good governance can ensure economic justice in society.

Political Justice

Political justice calls for equal political rights with the population. This can be achieved through transparency and accountability in the established institutions and processes. Good governance can ensure constructive cooperation between the stakeholders of the society and enable the realization of political justice in society.

Social Justice

Social justice calls for fair chances for every individual and ensures an inclusive society. Good governance plays a key role in ensuring social justice by making available the rights to every individual, thereby leading to the prosperity of the society.

Challenges towards Good Governance

Various challenges towards achieving good governance in India are:

Corruption and Nepotism

The prevalence of corruption has been one of the key obstacles to realising effective governance. The complicated and opaque command and control structure, the government's monopoly in being the service provider, an undeveloped legal framework, a lack of information, and a distorted view of individuals' rights have all generated incentives for corruption in India.

Criminalization of Politics

The most insidious challenge to India's democratic governance comes from criminals and musclemen who are increasingly entering the law making bodies. The criminalisation of the political process, the unholy alliance of politicians, civil officials and economic interests are having a negative impact on public policy formation and governance. The political elite as a whole is losing credibility.

Low Levels of Awareness of the Rights and Duties of Citizens

Low levels of awareness operate as a hindrance to effective government; when citizens are unaware of their obligations, they impinge on the freedom and rights of other citizens. Thus, a low level of awareness of the rights and duties of citizens leads to ineffective governance.

Lack of Accountability

The inadequacy of the system to hold the Civil Services responsible for their activities remains one of the reasons for inefficiency in governance. The major reason for this is the lack of separation of powers and accountability on the part of the government and its institutions. Further, the lack of accountability in the government's performance evaluation processes and lackadaisical attitude of citizens toward citizens and their problems has resulted in poor governance.

Ineffective implementation of laws

Hasty and ineffective implementation of laws and policies has led to hardship for the common man and even led to a lack of trust in the government in being a responsible.

Red tapism

The ill-conceived and rigid rules and procedures, in place of easing the realisation of good governance in India, have become a hurdle in itself. The rigid rules have become an end in itself rather than becoming a means to an end.

Addressing the challenges for achieving Good governance

Good Governance is a crucial aspect for the effective functioning of any society. Addressing its challenges requires a multifaceted approach. Here are some strategies to tackle good governance challenges:

Accountability: Ensure that public officials and institutions are held accountable for their actions. Transparency in decision-making processes and mechanisms for reporting and investigating corruption are essential.

Transparency: Foster openness in government operations. Publish information related to policies, budgets, and public services. Citizens should have access to relevant data to hold authorities accountable.

Predictability: Establish clear rules, regulations, and procedures. Consistency in decision-making helps build trust and confidence in governance.

Participation: Involve citizens in decision-making processes. Encourage public participation through consultations, feedback mechanisms, and civic engagement.

Reducing Inequality: Address disparities with regard to resources, services, and opportunities. Prioritize policies that promote equality and social justice.

Balancing Immediate and Long-Term Needs: While addressing immediate challenges, also plan for long-term sustainable development. Striking the balance is very crucial. Good governance is not a one-size-fits-all solution. It requires continuous efforts, adaptability, and collaboration among various stakeholders to create a better future for all.

Impact of Good Governance Practices

Good governance practices have a profound impact on society, influencing various aspects of well-being, progress, and stability. They are as explained below:

1. Social Trust and Cohesion
   a. Good governance fosters trust between citizens and institutions.
   b. When people believe in the fairness and transparency of governance, social cohesion strengthens.

2. Economic Prosperity:
   a. Transparent policies, efficient resource allocation, and stable legal frameworks attract investments.
   b. Economic growth, job creation, and poverty reduction result from effective governance.

3. Access to Basic Services:
   a. Well-governed societies ensure access to education, healthcare, sanitation, and clean water.
   b. Citizens benefit from improved quality of life.

4. Reduced Corruption:
   a. Transparent processes and accountability mechanisms curb corruption.
   b. Funds allocated for development reach their intended beneficiaries.

5. Political Stability:
   a. Good governance minimizes political turmoil and instability.
   b. Stable governments can focus on long-term planning and development.

6. Human Rights Protection:
   a. Ethical governance upholds human rights.
   b. Equal opportunities, justice, and dignity are safeguarded.

7. Environmental Sustainability:
   a. Effective governance balances economic growth with environmental conservation.
   b. Policies promote sustainable practices and protect natural resources.

As such, good governance positively impacts society by promoting fairness, prosperity, and the overall well-being of its citizens.

Conclusion

Effective operation of the government remains the key to the success of everyone. In recent times, when India is the third largest economy in the world, in PPP terms, and striving to achieve its goal of $5 trillion economy, there is a need to reformulate our national plan to give prominence to the Gandhian ideal of "Antyodaya" in order to reestablish good governance in the country. Only when the institutions and processes become efficient and corruption free can the country enjoy better per capita income, widespread literacy, decent health care, and a longer average life expectancy.

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