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Redefining Governance in Indian Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The context of governance is closely associated with brettonwood institutions. World bank reports emulate good governance and governance. Although, every nation has its historical, political ecology. Acceptance of global perspective of governance without local changes may not fit. This paper purports to examine political, historical and citizens perspective to evolve the Indian Model Of Governance.

Keywords: Governance, Citizen, World Bank.

"Everyone rich or poor, literate or illiterate, old or young, male or female, urbanite or rural, official or non-official, appear to be utterly dissatisfied with the existing administration and is highly and vocally critical of it."

India achieved its freedom in 1947, and since then, twelve five year plans have been launched to improve the lives of the people and to bring the country on the path of development. Numerous programs of development and many crores of Rupees have been spent by the governments to accomplish the goals of economic growth and development. But unfortunately, public suffering is continuously moving upward and distributed under the blanket of development. Although the statistical data of the economic growth of the country is showing an upward trend, the gap between rich and poor is more, the distribution of resources is unequal. More poor population, high crime rate, high rate of suicide and murder, high rate of infant mortality, and above all, a high rate of corruption among public servants as well as in the society are prevalent.

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We may raise our esteem by stating our economic growth rate, but the common man is suffering. And somewhere, all of us wondering what is government doing? Do the governments of our country embody good governance? If yes, then why is it not complementing it, and if no, why are we blindly following and continuing with prevalent form of management and good governance. The answer to this question is not straight and conveys the whole gamut of issues touching political history, morals, political philosophy, political economy, and society.

Here, the investigation of good governance takes a comparative rather than transcendental route. The focus of the central concern is 'how would good governance be advanced, rather than what would be perfectly just institutions and rules.' The objective is to find out real-life societies, behavioural norms, and structures to establish and advance good governance and not for perfect ideal institutions¹ This paper attempts to analyze and compare the context and content of the present conception of good governance (which is primarily envisaged in world bank documents and reports and also popularized through Brettonwood institutions). Indian construction of the notion of Good Governance with major influences- Vedic, British and Post British. Finally, the perspective of the common Indian society about it. At the final stage, the paper assimilates these divergent notions and moves to suggest what is most relevant and desirous for us. No other words probably justify this radical approach, then the terms of Amartya Sen- "The question to ask in this context is whether the analysis must be so confused to getting the basic institutions and general rules, right? Should we not also have examine what emerges in the society, including the kind of the lives that people can lead, given the institutions and rules, but also other influences, including actual behaviour, that would inescapably affect human lives".

In modern India, various political structures were introduced by the British before independence, the history of which is neither ancient nor very long. We have a system of Parliamentary democracy established and advanced by them. They introduced a responsible government in 1919 etc. Although, from ancient India to the period before the arrivals of the British, India was primarily governed by the benevolent monarch and democracy was seen more at the grass root levels. For example, kings like Harshavardhan, Ashok, Akbar were famous for their welfare orientations. During the Mauryan period, 'Gramika' or 'Gramini' was elected by the villagers and the king ratified their appointment. As a result, we had monarchical political structures, but political and administrative values were democratic. Present-day political and administrative structures are exogenously imposed and later on adopted by us without giving time to society to evolve requisite values suitable for new political and administrative structures.

Unfortunately, this trend is continuing. International politics is emerging and influencing India profoundly. Many administrative and economic changes are imposed by the donor agencies led by the IMF and the world bank in the name of good governance. There appear a conceptual dilemma and conflicting values in the construction of good governance. Hence in India, good governance is like a body without a soul. To understand this deeply, let us review the western and Indian construction of good governance first.

Good Governance -World Bank/IMF Construction:

The growth & popularity of the present-day notion of good governance is chiefly due to the rise of neo-liberalism.³ The dramatic oil-price increase of 1973 and 1979 triggered the slowdown and then served recession in the north and world economy as a whole and precipitated the so-called 'debt crisis' in the south in 1981-82.

This economic orthodoxy of the state has been exported & enforced in the global south via aid policies and measures formulated to address the debt crisis. IMF assumed an instrumental role in it and was echoed by the multilateral banks and major creditors

governments to protect the international financial system. Hence, the new policy, known as the Structural Adjustment Program, was designed to cut government expenditure, reduce the extent of state intervention in the economy and liberalization and international trade. "Adoption and implementation of an IMF approved SAP become a prerequisite for obtaining financial support. The world Bank (WB), regional development banks and most major northern bilateral donors followed suit so that it became impossible for an indebted country to borrow from them without SAP. This economic conditionality was complemented in 1990 by political conditionality, the prerequisite imposed by British and other donor governments for so-called good governance." (Mallipeddi, 2007)

Various economic considerations under the SAP scheme may be divided into two categories:

Stabilization Measures: These are short-term steps designed to arrest the deterioration in conditions and to provide a foundation on which longer-term measures could act:

- A public sector wage freeze to reduce wage inflation and government salary bills;
- Reduce subsidies on basic foods and education- to reduce govt. expenditure;
- Devolution of the currency- To make export cheaper and hence, more competitive and to deter imports.

Adjustment Measures: These were generally to be implemented as a second phase and would take longer to have an impact; their objective was to promote economic restructuring and economic competitiveness:

- Export Promotion
- Downsizing of the civil service
- Economic Liberalization
- Privatization
- Tax Reduction

With the help of these measures, a mechanical link has been established between SAP and good governance. Good governance becomes liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG) model of governance in western orthodoxy primarily.

Western conceptual construction of the term good governance denotes these features of a political and economic system that promote liberalism and Neo-liberal ideology. This conceptualization of good governance has been promoted by various donor agencies and penetrated in developing countries.

Good Governance - Indian construction:

Indian administration is as old as Indian civilization, dates back to Indus Valley civilization, followed by the Vedic period. Collections of four Vedas are treasures of virtuous knowledge about every aspect of human life. Vedic philosophy considers 'polity' and 'administration' as an integral part of human life. Hence, its construction is under 'Dharma' in Vedic works of literature. Vedic interpretation of 'Dharma' is not 'ways and methods of worshipping God' instead 'Dharma' is code of conduct for a human living - The principles which we have to observe in our daily life and social **relation** is constituted by what is called 'Dharma'. It is truths embodiment in life and power to refashion our nature.

As 'polity' and 'administration' are so integrated with human life, that 'governed (Prajā)' and 'Government (Rajā)' are inalienable. They are a family where the king looks after his subject

as head of a family, as a father. The relationship between them is that of father and son in Vedic analysis.

Such emotional imperative cannot be contrasted with the 'customer orientation of the people and government as 'service provider'. From an ancient Indian perspective, the king is also supposed to provide and cater to various needs of his people, but like a father to his family. Veda instincts king to safeguard his subject from external aggression and provide his subject with sufficient 'food (Ann)' and money (Dhan). King's primary 'Dharma' was 'serving' and 'protecting' his subject. At this juncture, Western and Indian perspective appears close (as present..... of responsibilities of government are the service provider and protector). But there exists a big chasm in both points of view. Here, the 'governed' and 'government' equation is emotional and moral in nature, which is not possible in the 'customer-driven-government' perspective, which is purely economic in nature.

But, this must not be interpreted that the concern is nowhere economic. Many hymns of Rig-Veda instruct the king/State to accumulate wealth for the welfare of the people and grants the right to make use of that wealth by the subjects:

The wealth accumulated by the King/State had been for providing food, health and other amenities to the people. Vedic philosophy believes in the overall *happiness* of the people, which in turn, depends on the satisfaction of various needs: social, economic, moral, physical etc. The state has to cater for their needs. Hence, the king used to devise various systems, i.e. economic, social, political, etc. So that these exist reciprocal relatedness among them and they contribute and compliment to each other needs. A balance had been sought in human living. To sum up, good governance in ancient Indian perspective is to maintain a balance in social order and cater various needs of the people accordingly and facilitate happiness in the lives of the people.

GOOD GOVERNANCE IN INDIA AFTER INDEPENDENCE

Such a vision can not be compared with this western perspective. Similar had happened when Britishers came to India to rule. They failed to understand the Indian version of governance. And, moreover, they attempted to impose their conception. Similar sentiments had been expressed by Lord Macauley. In his words-

“The destinies of our Indian empire are covered with the thick darkness. It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system till it has outgrown that system, that by good government. We may educate our subjects into a capacity for better government; that having become instructed in European knowledge. They may, in some future age, demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come, I know not but never will I attempt to avert or retard it. Whenever it comes , it will be the proudest day in English history.”

The words of John Sullivan seems apt 'our system acts much like a sponge, drawing up all the good things from the banks of Ganges and squeezing them down on the banks of Thames.' Establishment of the rule of law, secular in origin, impartial in application and efficient in operation have been considered as achievements of British rule in India. Unfortunately, the resultant was not good. A significant fact which stands out is that those part of India which have been longest under British rule are the poorest to-day. The progress made in India under British rule like the coming of railway, postal system, telegraph and communication etc.

Our national leaders and framers of the constitution were exposed to this western conception and construction of the governance. But it is also significant to note that their minds were trained in Indian philosophy. Its reflections are there in the constitution itself. Beginning with Tagore, freedom is the foremost value. For Tagore, it was of the highest importance that

people be able to live, and reason, in freedom. His attitude towards politics and culture , nationalism and internationalism, tradition and modernity, can all be seen in the light of this belief . Nothing perhaps expresses his value as clearly as a poem in the Gitanjali-

“ Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; where knowledge is free ; where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls; Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into dreary desert sand of dead habit; into that heaven of freedom , my father, let my country awake.

Hence our constitution ensures democratic rule. Democracy determines the scope as well as limits for governance. In the words of C. D. Deshmukh-

“It is equally important to realize that in a democracy they only are the agents, if not the instruments of the people. All types of government influences and are in turn, influenced by the wishes and opinions of the people but it is my conviction that both from the point of view of governors and governed, there is no other way of managing the affair of mankind except through democracy, for it inculcates responsibility in those who rule them . It is also system where the people are most likely to get the standards and scope of governance which they desire and deserve.”

Our constitution has established the parliamentary structure of the representative democracy. But democratic crisis is witnessed all over the globe. Mere conceptual framework of the popular government alone can not ensure its superiority over other forms of government and inclusion of people's choice. “In sixty years of governance, what we found and felt is that the masses are ruled by the political elites in collaborations with the bureaucracy in the way British ruled”. This crisis in democracy can be explained through Robert Dahl's supposition – ‘modern industrial states were not democracies so much so polyarchies- shifting coalition of powerful interest groups’ in the book titled as ‘A preface to Democratic Theory’.* Almost similar discontent has been depicted in the statement of the Rajani Kothari- ‘To-day, the state is seen to have betray the masses, as having become the prisoners of dominant classes and their transnational patrons and as having increasingly turned anti-people.’

An editorial appeared in the Stateman 13 may 2012 titled ‘Democracy in peril’ further present the picture of democracy in our country-

“The manner in which the authority have been trying to crush the agitation of the people's movement against Nuclear energy , which is no longer a mere protest against generating the electricity by using nuclear energy to boil water, is shocking. It is the life and death struggle of the very survival of the government of the people, by the people and for the people. Thousands of the people from neighbouring villages to Kudan Kullam Nuclear Power project have surrendered their voter ID cards, claiming that we are surrendering our freedom and democratic rights at the altar of a few hundred megawatt destructive nuclear power.”

Does this support the C. Douglas Lummis analysis that present day development model is anti democratic? Does this provide answer to our previously asked question how the economic growth rate and public suffering are rising simultaneously? It is the result of the blindly following the western liberal structure of the democracy without considering the political and social behaviors and values. This myopically considers democracy as a form of government and state. And forgets that democracy is not merely arrangement of the government but it is also a form of society , and, above all an ethical idea and way of life. (the Indian construction). Probably, Gandhiji's Ramrajya is more close to this notion. ‘State where external controls over individual inner conscience are removed to their fullest extent. In such a state every individual would be his own ruler but his rule will never be a hindrance to his neighbor, for the realization of spiritual unity of all human beings would make his

submission for the collective good an essential ingredient of his own identification as an individual'. Present day democratic structures are under trial and still searching its actuality. It is necessary to follow democracy as an ethical idea, a way of life and a form of society first than it may be followed by any democratic political structure of the government. As Gandhiji stated that democracy is not the rule of majority but it should be able to take care of smallest limb of its realm, entails the true spirit and philosophy of the democracy. Without philosophy of the democracy, democracy is like body without soul.

Another reflection of Indian values in the constitution is the adoption of socialist order and Directive Principles. The type of constitution that constituent assembly members created has socialist bias as its citizens desired or as its needs demanded, being in general, imbued with the goals, the humanistic aim bases, and some of the techniques of social democratic thought.

The social revolution was put at the top of the national agenda by the constituent assembly when it adopted the objective resolution, which called for social, economic transformation. The directive principles of the state policy would make applicable the socialist as well as the social revolutionary content of the constitution.

Socialist order, directive principles and welfare orientation of the Indian constitutions are enshrining the ancient values of governance. Provisions about equitable distribution of the resources, equal employment opportunities, education for all, quality of life and health concerns, social and class equality, freedom for religion are the expressions of the same.

Present day India is struggling to accommodate between these two constructions of governance and good governance. In my view, the only criterion for good governance is public good and public welfare. Good governance and its measures should only be tools to achieve them. At present, poverty and unemployment are on the rise. The disparities between the rich and poor owing to the capitalist model of modernization have been increasing. The benefits of the economic growth have not yet reached the millions of poor and neglected Indian masses, though the economic growth has been achieved.

The new economic policy has not produced genuine economic growth with equity and social justice and Structural Adjustment Program has attacked the conditions of life and work of the working people and poor, marginalizing women in various aspects of their existence.* At this juncture, we need to re-think LPG model of good governance and must move towards public welfare and public good.

Table1 : Profile of the Respondents					
Rural	Urban	Male	Female	Literate	illiterate
25	25	25	25	25	25

At this backdrop, a study has been conducted to understand Indian citizen's perspective on good governance as in true democracy, choices of the people matter. This analysis may also give insight to evolve a new model of good governance based on the citizen's perception. The study has collected the opinion of the 50 respondent on the following questions:

First, what constitute good governance in their view.

Second, how far various measures like privatization, transparency, e-governance, downsizing the government etc. are important to achieve good governance.

Third, What they suggest to better our government.

The sample is inclusive of rural, urban, literate, illiterate, male, female etc. The profile of the respondents is depicted in the table no.1.:

For analyzing the opinions of the respondents Content analysis was applied. Many points have emerged out of this analysis. Few of these points are close to the Indian construction of the good governance and few points are close to the western construction of the notion. Table 2 and 3 depict this analysis:

Table 2: Good Governance- citizen's perspective:

<i>Points close to Indian Construction:</i>	
1. Pro-poor/focus on poverty eradication/ensuring food for all.	(17)
2. Equality/social justice/respect for weaker section	(10)
3. Essential services and commodities should be available to the people.	(9)
4. Inflation control	(3)
5. Benefits to farmers/agricultural sector	
6. Opportunities to people to maintain their wellbeing through education	(20)
7. Ethical / free of corruption/growth and development oriented.	(14)
8. Focus on employment generation and human resource development	(5)

In India poverty is still haunting the development and growth. A large per cent of the population is still poor lacking basic amenities for life. In order to bring the weaker section and poor section to main line the government needs to be pro-poor and as well as economy need to be welfare oriented. Food , health, education shelter still constitute basic concerns. In India many farmers and their families die of hunger. Many forced to commit suicide due to acute poverty. Unfortunately, LPG model provide no room to drive economy on welfare principle. It works and only works for benefit. Privatization may be a good option where distribution of resources are more or less equal. But country still needs redistributive policies to bring every section at par and to make each section equally powerful in the competition.

Hence, social justice constitutes important construction of the good governance (with total response- 10)

Table-3; Good Governance- Citizen's Perspective

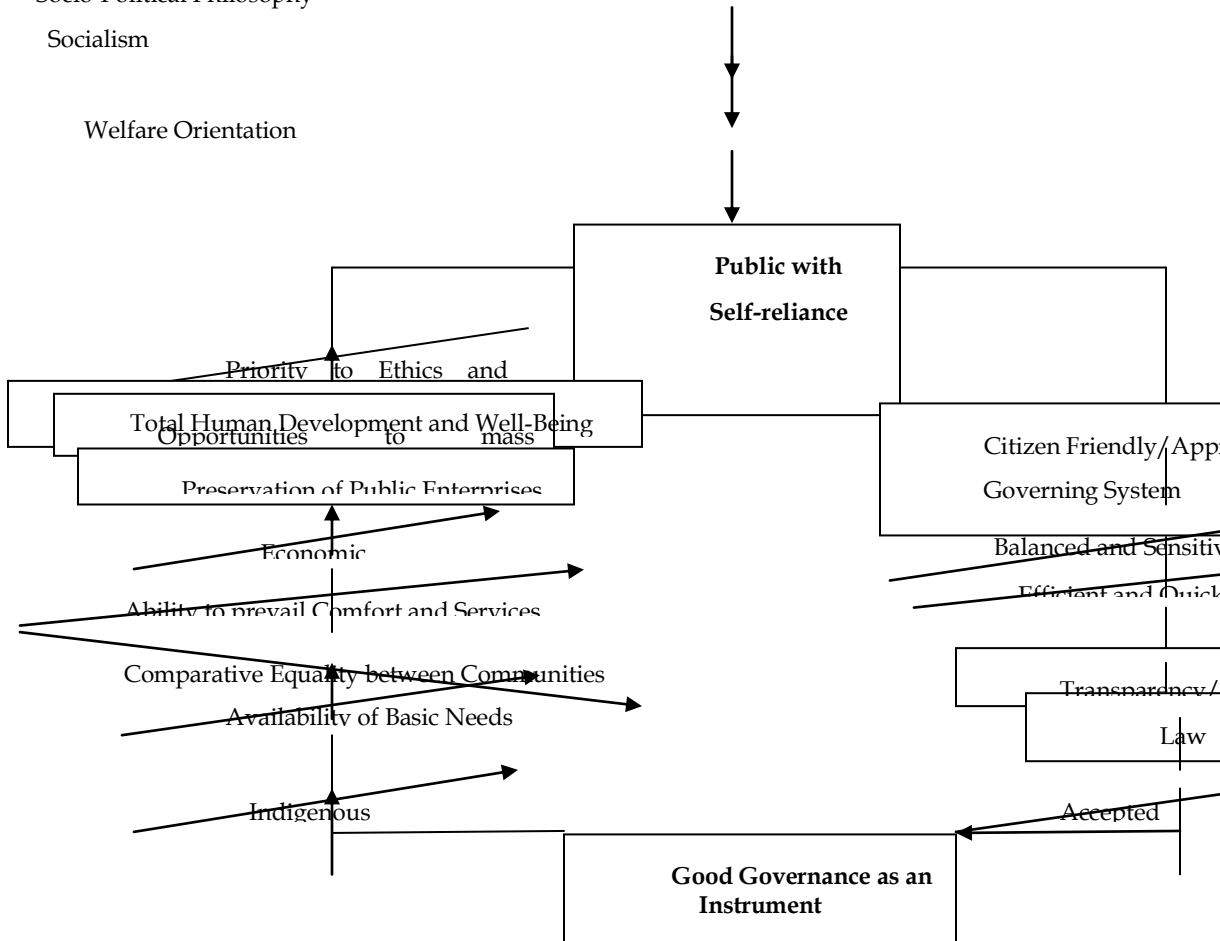
<i>Points close to the western Construction:</i>	
1. Law and order	(20)
2. Transparency/Accountability/Fairness	(7)
3. Efficient and quick administration	(7)

Model of Good Governance

Socio-Political Philosophy

Socialism

Welfare Orientation



Even the results of privatized economy are not so economically healthy all over the globe. Recently, USA has gone through the economic rough patch together with some other economic powers. They are reviewing the role of public sector in the national development. Even, economic growth of India is also showing sluggish results and labeled as 'first fallen angel of the BRIC nations'. Such circumstances always results in rapid rise in the inflation in the country. Poor and vulnerable classes are the direct victims of the situation.

We need to take care of vulnerable class. Still in the country discrimination prevails on the basis of socio-economic factors. Women, child, poor, low caste groups deserve special attention.

At the same time, we need to create our national resources and promote economic growth so that our system should be able to cater for the needs of citizens. For that, our economic system needs to be connected with the economic, political and administrative systems of the world. Figure1 attempts to construct a model of good governance based on the Indian as well as the western notion of the concept.

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