Unit- III

Chapter 7 – Good Governance: Concept, Elements, Importance

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Objectives: The Objectives of this chapter are to make the students aware of:
1. The concept of Good Governance;
2. Elements/Principles of Good Governance;
3. Importance of Good Governance;
4. Initiatives towards Good Governance in India;
5. Challenges in Achieving Good Governance;
6. Important Terms/Terms/Information;
7. Short and Long Questions;
8. MCQs for Competitive Examinations; and
9. Suggested Readings.

Introduction

Governance refers to the process of decision-making and the mechanisms through which those decisions are implemented and monitored. In a democratic framework, governance is not limited to government institutions alone; it encompasses the dynamic interactions between the state, the private sector, and civil society.

The concept of Good Governance gained prominence in the late 20th century, especially through the initiatives of international organisations such as the United Nations, World Bank, and OECD. These bodies highlighted the strong correlation between the quality of governance and outcomes like sustainable development, poverty alleviation, and effective public service delivery.

Good governance, therefore, goes beyond the idea of efficient administration. It represents the ethical, transparent, accountable, participatory, and equitable exercise of authority, where power is used responsibly to advance the welfare of citizens. It ensures that decision-making is inclusive, rights are respected, resources are managed prudently, and institutions remain responsive to the needs and aspirations of society.

Concept of Good Governance

Good governance refers to the norms, values, and practices that ensure the state is managed in a way that is just, transparent, participatory, accountable, and responsive to citizens. Unlike mere governance, which can be either efficient or corrupt, good governance emphasises fairness, justice, and inclusivity in the exercise of authority.

— **World Bank (1992):** defined it as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development.

— **The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP-1997):** Good governance is, among other things, participatory, transparent and accountable. It is also effective and equitable. And it promotes the rule of law. Good governance ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on a broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources.

— **Kofi Annan (Former UN Secretary-General):** Good governance is ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law; strengthening democracy; promoting transparency and capacity in public administration.

Good governance, thus, refers to the process of exercising authority in a manner that is legitimate, transparent, accountable, participatory, equitable, and effective. It ensures adherence to the rule of law, promotes human rights, empowers citizens—especially the vulnerable—and guarantees that political, social, and economic resources are managed responsibly to achieve sustainable development and social justice.

Elements/Principles of Good Governance

Scholars, practitioners, and international organisations, such as the United Nations, World Bank, and OECD, have emphasised that good governance rests on certain fundamental principles. These elements are interdependent and collectively ensure that governance serves the larger goals of justice, equity, development, and sustainability. The following are the key principles of good governance:

Introduction to Public Administration

1. **Participation – Ensuring People's Voice in Governance**
   Participation ensures that citizens play an active role in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate representatives. It empowers communities, promotes inclusivity, and ensures that governance is consultative rather than top-down. Active civic participation enhances ownership of policies and fosters a democratic culture.
   Examples: Gram Sabhas in Panchayati Raj institutions, public hearings (Jan Sunwai), citizen charters.

2. **Rule of Law – Upholding Justice and Equality**
   The rule of law ensures that governance is guided by a fair and impartial legal framework applied equally to all. It protects citizens' rights, prevents misuse of authority, and strengthens trust in democratic institutions. Independent judiciary and enforcement agencies play a crucial role in maintaining justice.
   Examples: Fundamental Rights in the Indian Constitution, Article 14 (Right to Equality), and judicial review by the Supreme Court.

3. **Consensus-Oriented – Balancing Diverse Interests**
   Societies are diverse, with multiple interests and viewpoints. Consensus-oriented governance promotes dialogue and negotiation to achieve broad agreement on policies. By mediating between conflicting interests, it ensures that the collective will is prioritised over sectional gains, promoting social harmony.
   Examples: Coalition government decision-making, consultations by NITI Aayog, National Development Council deliberations.

4. **Efficiency and Effectiveness – Delivering Results for Citizens**
   Governance must deliver quality outcomes that meet public needs using resources wisely. Efficiency involves minimising waste, while effectiveness ensures that government actions achieve their intended goals. Together, they make administration practical, timely, and sustainable.
   Examples: Digital India initiative for faster services, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) to reduce leakages, e-filing of taxes.

5. **Accountability – Answerable to the People**
   Accountability ensures that public officials and institutions are responsible for their actions and decisions. It acts as a safeguard against corruption and promotes ethical conduct. Mechanisms of accountability strengthen trust between government and citizens.
   Examples: Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) audits, Right to Information Act (2005), parliamentary oversight of the executive.

6. **Transparency – Building Trust through Openness**
   Transparency requires that government processes and decisions are open and accessible to citizens. By providing information freely and in a clear manner, transparency reduces corruption, promotes confidence in leadership, and enables citizens to assess performance.
   Examples: Right to Information Act (2005), government e-portals, publication of open budget documents.

7. **Responsiveness – Addressing Needs without Delay**
   Responsiveness means that institutions and processes must serve all stakeholders promptly and effectively. Citizen-centric governance requires timely service delivery, grievance redressal, and adaptability to changing needs. This prevents alienation and strengthens the relationship between citizens and the state.
   Examples: Public Grievance Portals, Emergency Helplines (112), service guarantee laws like Madhya Pradesh's Lok Seva Adhiniyam.

8. **Equity and Inclusiveness – Leaving No One Behind**
   Equity and inclusiveness ensure that all members of society, especially marginalised groups such as the poor, women, children, the elderly, the differently-abled, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and minorities, have equal access to opportunities. It promotes fairness, justice, and empowerment by addressing systemic disadvantages and encouraging participatory decision-making.
   Examples: Reservation policies in education and employment, Right to Education Act (2009), MGNREGA for rural employment, Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao, Accessible India Campaign.

Importance of Good Governance

Good governance is not only the foundation of efficient administration but also the key to advancing democratic values and sustainable development. Its importance can be outlined as follows:

1. **Strengthening Democracy:** Good governance deepens democracy by ensuring citizen participation, respect for the rule of law, and accountability of elected representatives. It transforms governance into a consultative and inclusive process rather than a top-down exercise.
   Example: Panchayati Raj Institutions and the RTI Act (2005) enhance democratic participation.
2. **Promoting Development:** Transparent and accountable governance attracts investment, encourages innovation, and ensures efficient utilisation of resources, thereby driving economic growth and social welfare.
   Example: Ease of Doing Business reforms and Digital India initiatives.
3. **Reducing Corruption:** By embedding transparency, accountability, and legal safeguards, good governance minimises the misuse of authority and public resources, thereby promoting ethical conduct.
   Example: E-procurement systems, CAG audits, and vigilance mechanisms.
4. **Protecting Rights and Justice:** It safeguards fundamental rights, ensures fairness, and promotes inclusiveness so that marginalised and vulnerable groups are not left behind in development.
   Example: Reservation policies, Right to Education Act (2009), and welfare schemes for women and minorities.
5. **Enhancing Service Delivery:** Efficient and responsive governance ensures timely and quality delivery of services in areas such as health, education, infrastructure, and welfare programs, thereby improving the quality of life.
   Example: Ayushman Bharat scheme, online grievance redressal portals.
6. **Building Public Trust:** When governance is transparent, ethical, and citizen-centric, it strengthens public confidence in democratic institutions and reduces alienation.
   Example: Social audits under MGNREGA and citizen feedback platforms.
7. **Ensuring Sustainable Development:** Good governance promotes balanced growth by integrating economic progress with environmental protection and social justice, ensuring intergenerational equity.
   Example: Renewable energy initiatives, Swachh Bharat Mission, and sustainable urban planning.

Initiatives towards Good Governance in India

India's governance framework has undergone continuous reform since Independence, with various committees, commissions, and policy initiatives contributing to the promotion of accountability, transparency, participation, and efficiency. Some of the important milestones are outlined below:

1. **1949 – N. Gopalaswami Ayyangar:** Recommended improvements in the functioning of government activities and procedures. Led to the establishment of the Organisation and Methods (O&M) Division in the Union Government.

Introduction to Public Administration

2. **1953 & 1956 – Paul H. Appleby Reports:** Emphasised improving administrative processes to enhance citizen satisfaction. On his recommendation, the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) was established in 1954.
3. **1957 – Balwant Rai Mehta Committee:** Advocated democratic decentralisation through the establishment of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) at the grassroots.
4. **1964 – K. Santhanam Committee:** Suggested measures to curb corruption in public administration. On its recommendation, the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) was set up in 1964.
5. **1966 – First Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC I):** Undertook a comprehensive study of Indian administration. Submitted 20 reports covering personnel administration, machinery of government, financial management, and citizen–administration interface.
6. **1977 – Ashok Mehta Committee:** Suggested reforms to strengthen Panchayati Raj, including a two-tier system and more autonomy to local bodies.
7. **1983 – Sarkaria Commission:** Examined Centre–State relations and recommended greater cooperative federalism.
8. **1985 – G.V.K. Rao Committee:** Highlighted excessive bureaucratic control over PRIs. Recommended empowering Panchayati Raj institutions as instruments of development and accountability.
9. **1990 – New Economic Policy (NEP):** Introduced Liberalisation, Privatisation, and Globalisation (LPG). Triggered wide-ranging economic reforms that necessitated revamping governance structures to meet global standards.
10. **1992 – 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts:** Gave constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions (rural) and Municipalities (urban). Strengthened grassroots democracy and citizen participation.
11. **2004 – Right to Information Act (RTI, enacted in 2005):** Landmark step for transparency and accountability in governance. Empowered citizens to demand information and hold authorities accountable.
12. **2005 – Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC II):** Submitted 15 reports on ethics, e-governance, financial management, citizen charters, and public order. Defined good governance as citizen-centric, transparent, accountable, and effective administration.
13. **2005 – National Rural Health Mission (later National Health Mission):** Improved service delivery in the health sector, decentralising planning and enhancing community participation.
14. **2006 – MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act):** Strengthened inclusive governance by ensuring the right to work and livelihood security for the rural poor.
15. **2007–2010 – Punchhi Commission on Centre–State Relations:** Recommended mechanisms for better coordination, cooperative federalism, and balanced governance.
16. **2014 – Digital India Programme:** Promoted e-governance and ICT-enabled service delivery. Aimed at reducing corruption, improving efficiency, and ensuring accessibility.
17. **2015 – NITI Aayog established:** Replaced Planning Commission. Promotes cooperative federalism, participatory planning, and performance-based governance.
18. **2016 – Demonetisation & JAM Trinity (Jan Dhan–Aadhaar–Mobile):** Strengthened financial transparency and direct benefit transfers (DBTs). Reduced leakages in subsidy and welfare delivery.
19. **2017 & 2025 – GST (Goods and Services Tax):** Simplified taxation, promoted cooperative fiscal federalism, and improved ease of doing business.
20. **2020 – Digital Governance push during COVID-19:** Use of Aarogya Setu app, CoWIN platform, and digital platforms highlighted the importance of technology in responsive and resilient governance.

21. **2020 – Mission Karmayogi (National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building):** Reform initiative to create a future-ready civil service with skills, ethics, and citizen-orientation.
22. **Recent Initiatives (2021–2023):**
     Gati Shakti Mission: Integrated infrastructure planning for efficiency.
     PM e-Vidya & DIKSHA platforms: Digital education access for inclusiveness.
     Faceless Tax Assessment: Promotes transparency and minimises discretion in governance.

From Ayyangar's reforms in 1949 to Digital India and Mission Karmayogi today, the trajectory of Indian governance highlights a progressive shift from bureaucratic control to citizen-centric, participatory, transparent, and technology-driven administration. This evolution reflects India's long-standing commitment to realising the ideals of Good Governance in theory and practice.

Challenges in Achieving Good Governance
Achieving good governance is a multidimensional task that requires transparent institutions, accountable leadership, and active citizen participation. However, several challenges hinder the realisation of these ideals:

1. **Corruption and Nepotism:** Corruption undermines trust in public institutions and diverts resources from essential services. Nepotism, where appointments and benefits are given based on personal connections rather than merit, further erodes efficiency.

   Example: In some local governments, public contracts may be awarded to companies owned by relatives of officials, leading to inflated costs and substandard services.

2. **Weak Institutional Capacity:** Poorly functioning institutions cannot implement policies effectively or respond to citizens' needs. This includes inadequate staffing, lack of training, and insufficient resources.

   Example: Health departments in rural areas may be understaffed, leading to delayed or poor-quality medical services despite government programs.

3. **Political Instability and Interference:** Frequent changes in leadership, political conflicts, or undue influence from political actors can disrupt continuity in governance and policy implementation.
   Example: Election-related changes in state governments may lead to abrupt shifts in development priorities, leaving long-term infrastructure projects incomplete.

4. **Inequitable Development:** Unequal access to resources and opportunities can marginalise certain regions or communities, fostering social unrest and undermining governance.
   Example: Urban areas often receive better infrastructure and services compared to remote rural regions, causing disparities in education, health, and employment.

5. **Low Citizen Awareness and Participation:** Governance cannot succeed without an informed and engaged citizenry. Low levels of awareness about rights, responsibilities, and government programs reduce accountability and limit the impact of policies.

   Example: In many villages, citizens may be unaware of schemes like subsidised housing or employment programs, preventing them from benefiting fully and holding authorities accountable.

6. **Additional Challenge – Bureaucratic Red Tape:** Excessive procedural formalities and delays in administrative processes slow down service delivery and discourage public engagement.
   Example: Lengthy approval processes for business licenses can discourage entrepreneurship and economic growth.

7. **Additional Challenge – Weak Rule of Law:** When laws are not applied consistently or judicial processes are slow, it undermines governance and public trust.

   Example: Unresolved land disputes that have been ongoing for years can hinder the progress of development projects, leading to frustration among citizens.

Conclusion

Good governance is the cornerstone of a democratic and just society. It ensures that public institutions conduct affairs in a manner that is transparent, participatory, accountable, and responsive. In the modern era, governance is not judged solely by the efficiency of administration but by its ability to uphold values of justice, fairness, inclusivity, and sustainability. Therefore, good governance is not a destination but a continuous process of reform, adaptation, and citizen engagement, making it a vital precondition for democracy, development, and social harmony.

Important Terms/Terms/Information

1. **World Bank (1992):** defined it as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development.

2. **Elements of Good Governance:**
   - Participation – Ensuring People's Voice in Governance
   - Rule of Law – Upholding Justice and Equality
   - Consensus-Oriented – Balancing Diverse Interests
   - Efficiency and Effectiveness – Delivering Results for Citizens
   - Accountability – Answerable to the People
   - Transparency – Building Trust through Openness
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8. **2006 – MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act):** Strengthened inclusive governance by ensuring the right to work and livelihood security for the rural poor.

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Short and Long Questions

Short Answer Type Questions
1. Write a note on Good Governance.
2. Write two elements of Good Governance.
3. Give any three initiatives of the Government for Good Governance.
4. Give three challenges to achieve Good Governance.

Long Question
1. Define Good Governance. Give its Elements and Importance. Give GOI initiatives to achieve Good Governance.
2. Define Good Governance. Give its Elements and Importance. Give challenges to achieve the objectives of Good Governance.

MCQs for Competitive Examinations: https://forms.gle/jALCW6HQCCTJrYH96

Suggested Readings

1. World Bank. Governance and Development: https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/604951468739447676/pdf/multi-page.pdf

2. United Nations Human Rights - https://www.ohchr.org/en/good-governance/about-good-governance

3. Good Governance Index: https://egovernance.vikaspedia.in/viewcontent/e-governance/national-e-governance-plan/good-governance-index?lgn=en

4. Good Governance Index Assessment of State of Governance GGI 2020-21: https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/GGI%202%20020-21.pdf

5. Vibha Sharma & Shaveta Begra. Public Administration (C-7) Jalandhar: New Academic Publishing Company. (2022)

6. Fadia, B.L. and Kuldeep Fadia. Public Administration - Administrative Theories. Thirteenth Revised Edition. Agra: Sahitya Bhawan, 2017.

7. Relevant reading material from egyankosh - http://egyankosh.ac.in/
8. Relevant reading material from e PG Pathshala - https://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in/