

Good Governance and Challenges of Digital Technology: A Critical Evaluation

Abstract

In the age of globalization, Indian state is encouraging privatization of various institutions and services mean while also gradually with drawing its role from social welfare sectors. But at the time every government claims for good governance that includes the attributes of effective, creditable and legitimate administrative system citizen friendly, value caring and people sharing. Therefore the government cannot deny offering social services like education, health, sanitation, transport etc to its citizens. Apart from this the state has to fulfill its compulsory (duties) functions – to ensure security to its citizens, maintenance of law and order and deliverance of justice. These functions of the state (government) indirectly support welfare functions because for social-welfare administration, the protection of life, liberty and property of citizens, is its first pre-requisite. Through digital technology, an attempt is made to achieve good governance; it is only possible through e-governance that all the government services are delivered to citizens through a 'one stop shop'.

Keywords: Good Governance, Digital India, Welfare State, E-Governance, E-Kranti., Legitimacy, Socialism, Fundamentalism, Accountability, Citizen Centric Services.

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Introduction

The term good government became popular when it was used in the World Bank report 1989. It means implementation of public policy in favor of people. The concept of good governance is nothing but extension of humanist approach in the overall system of government and administration .In short it must have the attributes of an effective, creditable and legitimate administrative system citizen friendly, value caring and people sharing. The notion of good governance also includes various new dimensions as idea of sustainable development, the protection of human rights, dignity of man and the conservation of environment and eco system as a whole. It is noted that the idea of good governance is also used and advocated by western world to protect the ideology of liberal democracy against the socialism and fundamentalism.

The model of globalization was adopted in the hope that it would bring prosperity to the nation in term of higher production and economic growth. Indeed from 1991 onwards the gross domestic product of our country has gone up 8-9% and India has emerged as global economic power. India has attracted a great deal of foreign investment, and amount of international trade has been increased manifold. But it has been observed by the scholars that benefits of globalization have been confined to elite section of society, and its impact in the terms of social welfare has been by and far negative. In the name of economic reforms privatization, are encouraged by the state. The economic policies of our country are focusing (from 1991 onwards) more on the expansion of capitalism and privatization and continuously focus is diluted from issues of social welfare.

It is evident in various studies, as there is increase in rich-poor divide, the high rate of GDP has substantially benefitted only the upper 10-15% people, and depressed employment for marginalized section of the society¹. The top 10% population has a share of around 52% in the national wealth, and on the other hand the share of bottom 10% has been reduced to 0.21%². From 1991 agriculture and farmers have been neglected by the government and the average budgetary expenditure for irrigation is less than 0.35%³. It was observed that more than 3 lakh Small scale Industries (SSIs) and more than three lakh hand-loom and power-loom units were close down due to impact of globalization, because of decreasing bank loans to SSIs. Even in term of growth performance the SSIs are lagging behind from the time of inception of globalization, 1990-91

the percent of growth rate was 6.88%, but till 2002-03 it has been decreased to the extent of 4.69%⁴. It has also seen that impact of economic policies of the government has not resulted in inclusive and equitable development. The financial inclusion is still distant dream. Half of the population in India does not possess a bank account, 90% people have no access to credit or life insurance cover and 98% had no participation in the capital market⁵.

In this gloomy scenario the only hope for welfare state is good governance. The good governance is a holistic approach to achieve the benefit of welfare state and it is possible only through E-governance. E-governance also facilitated to the test of the citizen's "Right to know" which has been recognized today as a fundamental right. Transparency in government is the need of the hour. Various state governments have created their own portals which enable the common man to access information on different services through payment gate-ways. Citizen centric services are available today in the areas of land records, registration, insurance and renewal of driving licenses etc. The commercial tax departments have also successfully streamlined their operations of entry tax collection at check gates. It should also keep in mind that the resultant "digital India" would throw up many challenges for the political establishments as they will have to engage themselves with renewed vigour and innovation with a well informed citizens and businesses. There would also be setbacks during process of application of technology, as how a big country like India with limited resources and semiskilled population can achieve this goal. This process also demands an ethical dimension, as without it the whole exercise would be futile. Today the concept of good governance has become an ideal for government to be achieved. No government can survive in the future if it does not care for its citizens.

Objectives of the Study

Basic objective of this study is that how to deliver social justice to the needy people. The implementation of digital technology can be very helpful to achieve good governance. The government can deliver many social services through e-governance. But again application of digital technology in present scenario of semi skilled population is a difficult task. This should also keep in mind that in whole process of good governance and its digital implementation, the ethical dimensions must not be overlooked; otherwise whole exercise would be futile.

In today's time it seems that the policies of government are not conformity with the obligation of welfare state. By taking pro-corporate stand and neglecting plight of the people, the state is derogating from its constitutional responsibilities of creating an egalitarian society and providing social and economic justice. It is to be remembered that people are not just means to achieve higher economic growth, but they are ends in themselves, every policy of government must put the people at the centre of it as beneficiaries. But how it is possible for a government to be people oriented when it is openly supporting the economic

reforms based on privatization, discouraging the public sectors and so on. The answer lies in the theory and practice of good governance. They always try to prove themselves, as citizen friendly, value caring and people sharing. The main focus of this paper is firstly to evaluate concept of good governance and to show how major portion of social service administration is covered by good governance, secondly to explore the opportunities and challenges of e-governance.

A part from these two main objectives, the other subsidiary objective is also discussed in main body of research paper. The methodology used in this paper is descriptive and analytical. Through this methodology the objectives are properly elaborated and attempt is made to resolve the problems arising out of implementation of good governance through digital technology.

Good Governance

The concept of good governance is not a new one but various new dimensions and paradigms are attached with it in present time. Ancient philosophers like Kautilya (in Indian context) and Aristotle (in western context) were very much concerned about public good. Aristotle used to say that the state originates for the sake of life and continues for the sake of good life. He maintains that every art, action and enquiry aims at some good but politics is the science of good. To Kautilya the state was an institutional necessity for human advancement. Proceeding from this premise, he outlined almost everything that the state should do and described how it should be managed for the maximum happiness or good of its citizen's. So in spite of supporter of monarchy these philosophers were of the opinion that the basic role of state (including government and administration) is public welfare.

Good government connotes certain value assumptions where as governance as a process denotes value free dispensation. Different scholars define this concept in various ways. Now few definitions are considered in order to understand the meaning of the concept. Governance is defined as "the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affair at all levels. Good governance is among other thing, participatory, transparent and accountable. It is also effective and equitable and it promotes rule of law. Good governance ensures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and the allocation of development resources"⁶ According to another scholar good governance refers to efficient, effective, responsive, corruption free and citizen friendly administration which is central to promote social harmony, political stability and economic development.⁷ The good governance is basically concerned with decision making and its implantation. The administrative wing of government has a specific role in this regard.

In This way we can say that no government can deny performing social welfare functions. Because every government and its organs are being judged by its people oriented performances and

programs. For example if in a representative democracy, requisite parliamentary business is not transacted or obstructed and suspended either because of innate incapacity of the members in view of their lack of perception of public interest and people's good. It will be travesty of truth to say that the legislative governance is adequate again, when the citizen of the country are denied the basic services like water, electricity, security, transport, communication etc, then it has to be assumed that the executive wing of the government has miserably failed. Justice administration likewise is basic criterions of evaluating a system of government. If justice, for the common people, is delayed and resultant denied, the law breaker is not punished, then it is said that the government is lacking an effective and worthy judicial system which is also part good governance.

Good Governance is, thus a function of installation of positive virtues of administration and elimination of vices of dyes- functionalities. In short, it must have the attributes of an effective, credible and legitimate administrative system-citizen friendly, value caring and people sharing. It seems that the concept of good governance and its proper implementation cover major portion of social welfare administration.

New Dimensions

Although the concept of good governance was always claimed to be inherent in all forms of government theoretically and these governments always try to show that they are true guardian of the people and fulfilling the basic needs of common man. But after world war second (1945) dramatic changes in the world politics and the technology advancement have redesigned the political theory and its government structure at the global level. Political systems have been scrutinized and questioned on the ground of good governance rather than on ideology, ethics and value of democracy. The kinds of governments like parliamentary, presidential, unitary etc. were studied not only on the ground of merits and demerits but also on ability, legitimacy and transparency in governmental activities. Therefore the concept of good governance has immersed as a central theme of modern political theory.

Governance is considered as a management system of public affairs and resources through the exercise of power and public choices. Good governance must be legitimate, accountable, and competent and rule of law oriented and must protect human rights environment and eco system as a whole. The World Bank has outlined six criteria of good governance:

1. Legitimacy- accountability of practical exercise of power
2. Competence-acknowledgement by the public
3. Capacity to negotiate
4. Respect for rule of law
5. Concern for environment issues
6. Role of government as a facilitator rather than regulator

In other words good governance means good relations between the centers of political decisions and civil society. The relation between two

depends upon the process of decision making and extension of rule of law as well as distribution of information. In developing societies like India where distress between the two prevails, the relation between the two depends upon the transparency in the application of rule of law and honesty in the executive action. Therefore good governance is a system of equilibrium between the state and civil society in the exercise of power. However there may be different methods, strategies and approaches to bring equilibrium. Therefore governance is also considered as a theory of state, organization and society.

Indian Context: Practices and Realities

After independence the state's philosophy and administration ideology overnight went a nodal change and state acquired new dimensions and dynamics and become welfare state. The provision of fundamental rights along with directive principles of state policy becomes bases of governance in India. The things and the situations till Nehru era were not so bad, the administrative activates were truly people oriented. But during Mrs. Gandhi's tenure in the office the notion of good governance were eroded to such extent that India "was now confronted with the crises of governability."⁸ Using Samuel P. Huntington's framework and terminology Atul Kohli argued that there had been, in effect, a political decay of Indian institution including the wrecking of her own party, the Indian National Congress, the premiere institution of Indian political life.⁹ Since then the process of value erosion in political and administrative areas are gradually increasing.

In his powerful essay Kothari argues in the paradoxical formulation that not only in India but globally "governance has usurped by government" and further "government have taken over by the corporate interest and military – technocratic order and by the ideology of national interest and national security."¹⁰ Kothari's call is for a 'return to humane governance', including concern for human right and ethical imperatives, for the 'recovery of the human the good and the just'.¹¹ In restoring such a conception and the form of government, the intellectuals have a role to play which includes exposing miss governance and oppressions.

The Indian governance scenario during the last fifty years is a rather gloomy one, uninspiring and dismal. If the first one or two decades after independence kindled some hope, it was extinguished thereafter. The system failed on several fronts, the major one being, vision and mission; character, value and integrity, corruption, population, education, nationalist spirit factorization of political parties, social and institutional reforms and leadership vacuum.

Though, theoretically we had a great frame work of ideals in real state life and governmental dispensation, the future vision and lofty missions that we had during the initial years of independence were lost on way side. There was genuine leader ship vacuum with no one to lead people from the front. There were plenty of leaders, no doubt, but "they were there to pursue their own selfish ends and promote and consolidate clannish, casuist and communal

interests 'People' was first thing they talked of and the last thing they bothered about".¹²

Good governance was casualty, if by the vacuity of vision, absence of mission and lack of leadership, it becomes totally perverted by pervasive as well as incisive corruption in every department of social life in general and political life in particular. "The canker of corruption in the top echelons of government, whose responsibility it should be rid the system of any norm- displacement, non-ethical action and an arbitrate proactive has so systematically destroyed the entire fabric of social, economic and political life of this country"¹³

All the three wings of government, the three arms and instrumentalities of governance- legislative, executive and judiciary have, it seems, collaborated to set up a joint venture in mal-governance. In our 'functioning anarchy' where legislature and executive have conspired to sacrifice governance at the altar of political expediency, an active judiciary, in a very brief flicker of hope, seemed a savior, but that light has also gone out, engulfing the system of in a thick blanket of darkness. 'Bureaucrats, judges and politicians the three pillar of governance edifice do not bother about deadlines (they all want to hog headlines and bylines) because they deal in other people's money, time and morale. For the last named category, there is particularly no moral, they live in the present *Raat Gayee Baat Gayee!* These three in 'joint venture' with the other three namely economic financial mafias, underworld dons and trade union/vested interests lobbies have made mincemeat of good governance"¹⁴.

Good Governance to E-Governance

How do we retrieve the situation? What do we to salvage this sorry state? Of course we need to change. The need to jettison most of our "bad belongings" we need to reform the system we have inherited and made worse, after inheritance. The attack should on five fronts:

1. Political reforms
2. Judicial reforms
3. Administrative reforms
4. Social-institutional reforms
5. Human reforms

The first three involve systems and sub-system. The fourth involves the entire gamut of plural society and diversity of institutions, and fifth deals with the human and his mind, his character and psyche, the world of morals and values. Even if the first four battles are won which is extremely difficult, war cannot win, unless we are able to score decisive victory in the fifth, which admittedly, is most difficult, most time consuming and most substantive. Although the area and dimension of fifth reform is very wide and covers other reforms also, the questions of corruption touches all the boundaries of governance and administration.

Again coming to the reform of administration which is the single and most important instrumentality for good governance. Such reform must emphasis simplification of procedures, accountability and openness. It is achieved through application of digital technology is over all system of governance therefore

it can be said that through e-governance we can fulfill the ideal of good governance. Although e-governance is a part of digital technology that is introduced is every walk of Indian life to make Indian society and state powerful and inclusive economically socially and politically.

E-governance programs were initially introduced as an instrument of reform in the governance system for a speedy public service delivery. In other words state took refuge in technology to improve and revolutionize service delivery system in governance. It was also to expand to capability of governance and create opportunity for people. It was also to make governments more responsible connecting citizens to effectively meet public challenges and ultimately to build a more sustainable future for the benefit of the whole of society and world in which we live. To make the governance system pro-poor, even though most of them have backfired with higher costs and low returns to ordinary people. The transition from government to governance is not all about the administration; it is something's more about the process of management.¹⁵ Governance is "a set if values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economics, political and social processes at all levels through interaction among government, civil society and private sector".¹⁶ The World Bank refers to governance as "the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country exercised for the common good".

Overall to change the governance process and to bridge the gap between the government and citizens, the process of e-governance revolutionized. In other words, to challenge the "**Government Pathology**"¹⁷ the revolution of e-governance comes up. Though some states have failed to gain, state like Karnataka have gained so much e-governance is the interaction between citizens and government through electronic media.

Application of Digital Technology Opportunities and Challenges

There is empirical evidence that those societies and individuals who can operate computer based-tools belong to the higher pay brackets as compare to those who are not able to cope with digital tools are being pushed down the ladder in the job market. This is sufficient reason for India to go for digital technology. The congress led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government initiated the national e-governance programs that sought to digitally connect India. Further building on this, the Modi-led government initiated the five year (2014-19) Digital India Project with a commitment to transform India into a "connected" economy. This is, the project aims to connect the 2.5 Lakh villages across India through broadband highways, public internet access, universal access to mobile connectivity, e-governance, *e-kranti information for all, a robust electronic manufacturing regime, early harvest programs, and Information Technology (IT) for jobs-known as the nine pillars of Digital India.

The programs aims at improving delivery of services to citizens, businesses and government

employees; blending Information and Communication Technology (ICT) with administrative reforms to make to government more efficient; bring down costs and increase transparency in the working of government departments; and further, it seeks to include within its ambit unnerved and underserved areas in India. Digital India programs moves away from the silo approach to e-governance towards a synchronized approach so that citizens have a "one stop-shop" that will provide end-to-end services.

Viewed from this angle, The Digital India programs is centered on three on key areas, that is again a challenge to be addressed.

1. Digital infrastructure as a utility seeks to provide every citizen with high speed internet facility, 'a cradle to grave internet identity' access to common service centre.
2. Governance and services on demand which will be available in real time for online and mobile platform, seamlessly integrated across departments and jurisdictions. All citizen documents to be made available on the cloud platform; as a result, citizens will not be asked to produce such documents for availing services.
3. Empower citizens, especially rural citizens, by making them digitally literate. This will be done through collaborative digital platforms and by making available the digital resources in their native language with a view to making their participation a reality.

It is great challenge to meet these areas but we have to face it properly. These areas will explore new way of interaction between state and civil society; and this process will increase social welfare services for the people. The vision of Digital India encompasses that by the end of 2019, India would emerge as an Advanced Digital Economy from the present stage of a Constrained Digital Economy. Accordingly, its program content ensure: high speed internet as a core facility for the citizens who will have a "cradle to grave digital identity" with a capacity of participate in digital and financial space to common service centre.

Besides, the government will reform its governance with a view to improve transactions, ensuring simpler and lesser number of forms, and introduction of tracking facilities with interface between departments. Online repositories will be available for school certificates, voter ID cards, and driving license, etc. All government databases will be electronic including the workflow which will also be automated.¹⁸ Public grievances would be dealt with and monitored with an eye on persistent and recurring problems with a view to reforming the system as necessary.

The Government has acknowledgment that it will face unprecedented implementation challenges and that too, of gigantic magnitude. A high degree of Coordination effort between departments and a still higher degree of commitment is expected to come forth.¹⁹

1. The government strategy and work plan is designed such that it will meet the stated target of net zero import in electronics manufacturing

and the need of the IT sector in terms of employment generation by the year 2020.

2. The divide between digital illiterates and digital literates will need to be bridged at the faster rate failing which, inequalities among these group may reach unexpected proportion. These inequalities in turn would challenge ability of government and its leadership.
3. The government will be expected to perform immaculately while delivering services to its citizens. As citizens, and particularly their leader, get informationally empowered, they become more and more demanding customers of government's services, ensuring they have a say in the affairs of the government.
4. The Digitally informed citizens will have to say more in government and democratic process, in digital India a participatory model of government must offer more to its citizens than a mere customary periodic trip to the polling booth. Citizens will expect empowerment in order to become more active partners in the governance process.
5. The face of politics will be turned; it will be a one to one relationship between citizens and politicians-revitalizing local communities in an era of globalization. Digital India government will have to find new ways for working and new ways of interacting with the public, new ways of sharing responsibilities and new values that will emerge within the transformed society²⁰.
6. As the process of digitization in India gets going, integrating the use of digital tools into public sector modernization efforts would be huge. Resulting open approach to policy making and public service delivery will require that the government reorganizes itself around user expectations rather than its own internal logic and needs. So it would be extremely imperative to establish more effective co-ordination mechanism, stronger capacities and framework conditions so improve digital technologies' effectiveness for delivering public value and strengthening citizen trust.²¹

People Response to Digital Technology or E-Governance

How far the strategy would yield results in meeting the desired objectives would largely depend on factors which are outside the realm of technologies and tools for digitization. Those are rooted in the organizational maturity and commitment of the systems within the government and also dependent on public support, overcoming the shackles of historical and cultural traits and the installed wisdom which feels threatened with the transformations that will sweep them off their feet. Sustained political support as demonstrated at the time of announcement of the program, is the need of the hour since (i) many citizens many not be comfortable with the repaid pace of empowerment, and (ii) political parties could throw up complications to retard the process in order to maintain supremacy for as long as possible. In fact, the political allies in the ruling echelon may in the name of security

concerns focus on the “dark” side of digital society, masking the reality that even the security threats would be responded to in an effective way only by a well-versed digital India with a strong command over digital tools.²²

The presence of information kiosks and on-line information systems may not impress the rural poor at large. In other words, people who are in the upper strata, globalised in outlook and practices and are computer literate are likely to be greatly in favour of digitized governance. It does not mean to say that the common people would not welcome e-governance programme (in future), they will, if that generates convenience of procedures and save times and harassment at the hand of the governments functionaries. In reality, if the governance program meet their needs as perceived by them and not by the technocrats or bureaucrat. Hence; governments have to be careful with the potential for the digital divide, to prevent certain citizen from benefiting from on-line services. Indeed, the success of e-governance program implementation depends on proper process and people's participation.

Conclusion

The process of e-governance is increasingly being perceived as an interaction of a complex set of factors. In recent times e-governance has emerged as a vital tool for lubricating the wheels of development process. E-governance is expected to engineer the paths of development towards meeting much avowed social goals of equity and justice to bring a positive effect on the lower strata of the society. Therefore the challenge before the policy makers it to design effective e-governance structures and institutionalizes them in tune with the local needs and requirements. Very often superimposition of a development framework designed for developed country context does not fit into the needs of developing countries, rather it needs to be modified and redesigned to suit the need for local people. Therefore, understanding of the local institutions and culture is vital and should be given prime role in designing any policy for them. Despite resentments and oppositions, technological advancement has provided to be beneficial for the poorest of the poor. But, it is argued that technological interventions also need support structures to facilitate the process of the implementation and result oriented outcomes. As in rural areas and smaller towns, the various demographic and socio-economic factors such as income levels, cultural attitudes, geographic and social fragmentation are in one way an obstacle on the way to success of e-governance program. Even the social and political environments within which the e-governance projects operated are not always seen to be conducive to their operation.

So in this context, the e-governance program can be implemented with the aim of improving information and service delivery, encouraging citizen participation in the decision making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is presumed to enhance the capabilities of the poor people. People will get empowered and seek social justice, in the sense that

technology will be a means of opportunity for them. Lastly, this will provide for transparency and accountability in governance. Last but not least, like science and mathematics, one way technology will be still at the centre of those changes of the terms and circumstances of human existence. It so, because now in the recent age technology has been the most important device in the change of system and the system is changing only for the existence of human beings.

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