

BACKGROUND

The term 'Governance' finds its roots in various languages. The Greek word '*kubernan*' which means to steer, the Latin word '*gubernare*' which means to steer or rule, the old French word '*governer*'... all led to the finalization of the word 'govern' in Middle English which means 'to control, influence, or regulate (a person, action, or course of events)' or 'to conduct the policy, actions, and affairs (of a state, organization, or people) with authority'. The true context of Governance has always been in the act of governing and being governed - more importantly in the act of entrusting a few individuals to create laws, set order and define conduct for the remaining masses. Each form of Government has been founded, structured, pillared and built strong on the concoction of laws and their enforcement.

If ancient India is to be revisited, the role of *Guru*, *Mantri* and *Sachiv* in any kingdom had been inclusive of their duties to time and again remind the ruler of the land as regards his legal responsibilities and to guide him towards the creation of more laws and their effective enforcement - all with the intent of strengthening the Governance framework.

It is for this very reason and aspect that the nation has remembered and differentiated the rules of various kings, based on their Governance Styles. What is even more fascinating is the fact that the *Rajgurus*, *Sachivs* and *Mahamantris* of these Rulers have been accorded equal respect for their wise counsel and guidance.

If the entire course of time is to be seen as a series of events and actions, the Indian scenario has been the one to witness the culture of '*Yug*' as a measurement of time and as a medium to study the changes in ethos, morals and values over the different spans of time.

Good Governance in the Indian scenario has been more of a legacy than a concept. A tradition that has been considered to be of supreme significance so as to be taken forward with immense respect and gratitude towards those from whom it has been passed forward. The age old concept of '*Ram Rajya*', comprising the ideology of Lord Ram to preach, promote, profess and practice transparency and accountability in decision making is what the modern day governance experts look for in any entity, organization or nation.

As a country preparing itself to be the next global super power, as a nation standing on the cusp of glory towards taking a quantum leap into the future, as a unified persona portraying self-reliance and resilience,

the kindred spirit of Governance cannot be left behind. Even further, the same cannot be limited to the creation of laws and regulations and to the adherence of the existing legislations. If one were to imagine the journey of this nation into the times ahead imitating the steps of a ladder, one cannot fathom the same ladder to be without the side-pillars and hinges of good governance.

Good
governance
broadly exhibits
following
characteristics:

Participation

Strategic vision

Rule of Law

Transparency

Responsiveness

Consensus Orientation

Equity Building

Effectiveness and Efficiency

Accountability

Pondering over the aspects which tantamount to the presence of good governance - a list of characteristics hog the limelight together, but the single most significant fact is that it refers to the task of running the Government in an effective manner. It goes without saying that Governments globally must imbibe good governance as part of their regular affairs for it is the basic right of all citizens. Researchers having contextualized good governance in their own myriad ways have out-rightly emphasised that there is no alternate option for good governance. Since the quintessence of good governance appears to be a set of principles towards maximization of citizen welfare, aspects of efficiency, effectiveness, participation and accountability tend to form the foundational elements of good governance.

GOVERNANCE DEFINED GLOBALLY

“Good Governance is an essential complement to sound economic policies and is central to creating and sustaining an environment which fosters strong and equitable development. Good Governance consists of the following components: capacity and efficiency in public sector management, accountability, legal framework for development, and information and transparency.”

~ World Bank

“Governance and Development” (1992)

“The exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations, and mediate their differences.”

~ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (1997)

“Governance has been defined to refer to structures and processes that are designed to ensure accountability, transparency, responsiveness, rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empowerment, and broad-based participation. Governance also represents the norms, values and rules of the game through which public affairs are managed in a manner that is transparent, participatory, inclusive and responsive. Governance therefore can be subtle and may not be easily observable. In a broad sense, Governance is about the culture and institutional environment in which citizens and stakeholders interact among themselves and participate in public affairs. It is more than the organs of the government.”

~ UNESCO International Bureau of Education

Good Governance “... encompasses the role of public authorities in establishing the environment in which economic operators function and in determining the distribution of benefits as well as the relationship between the ruler and the ruled.”

~ OECD

“Governance encompasses the system by which an organisation is controlled and operates, and the mechanisms by which it, and its people, are held to account. Ethics, risk management, compliance and administration are all elements of governance.”

~Governance Institute of Australia

“Governance is the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority necessary to manage a nation’s affairs. The process by which decisions are made and implemented (or not implemented). Within Government, Governance is the process by which public institutions conduct public affairs and manage public resources.”

~IMF

Manual on Fiscal Transparency, Glossary (2007)

GOVERNANCE THROUGH THE KALEIDOSCOPE OF ANCIENT SCRIPTURES

Even though gaps may appear to be visible in formal texts globally, the Indian backdrop, with its ancient scriptures, texts and other historical proofs has awe-strikingly evidenced the presence of governance since the inception of mankind. Be it the culture of kingship, dictatorship or democracy - irrespective of the form, theory or structure in place; governance, or even further, the presence of good or bad governance has been a key deciding factor responsible in the rise and downfall of entire civilizations - changing and shaping the course of mankind through the entire timeline.

Indian scriptures, irrespective of their ancient roots have been valued for their significance across ages and generations. From the words of *Tulsidas* in *Ramayana* to the teachings of *Shri Krishna* compiled to form the *Shrimad Bhagvad Gita*, from the *shlokas* in the Vedas and Upanishads to the age old *subhashitas*, all of them have been regarded highly and not only in the religious and spiritual world but in the business and corporate world as well.

While the *Manusmriti* and the *Arthashastra* were crafted by *Manu* and *Chanakya* centuries ago, yet the words of these scholars find presence, relevance & therefore acceptance in the modern day context. Their significance can be gauged from the fact that the business and management research arena is thronged by full-fledged studies on the interconnection and relevance of these documents in the corporate scenario.

Amongst the four *Yugas*, beginning with *Satyug*, *Treta*, *Dwapar* and *Kaliyug*, the distinguishing factor has largely been played by Governance. The ancient scriptures of each period have been a portrayal of the governance practices apart from being a depiction of the culture, heritage, ethics, morals and values shared forward.

INTRODUCTION

Satyug

The Manusmriti occupies the place of being the first and foremost formal document, penned to provide a direction to the administrative activities and actions.

Manu's administrative ideas have been considered to be highly rational. According to him the administrator must be wise, enlightened and dedicated to the service of the public; having an efficient and loyal cabinet, a competent and incorruptible civil service and an intelligent judiciary. He must also have a compact legislature comprising experts with dedicated service motive. A good administrator must also see that taxes and law are flexible and are levied justly. His ideal state is a federal form of government with separation of governmental powers into various departments. Even in the monarchical form of government, Manu favoured freedom of sovereignty for all individuals irrespective of their caste, creed or religion which is one of the ideals of modern democratic system. His point of emphasis such as the fact that Universal employment should be provided to individuals depending on their inherent characteristics to lead a happy and peaceful life suggest that they were not intended to be a code of law for any practical group, inhabiting in a specific geographical area but for the entire society and polity. *Manusmriti* occupying a place of highest authority in the Indian polity is manifested in the application of the injunctions of *Manusmriti* in various branches of Indian administration (Rao 2005).

Treta Yug

Believed to have been composed some time in 5th Century BCE by Maharishi Valmiki, Ramayana narrates the life of Shri Rama, the Prince of the legendary kingdom of Kosala, whose capital was Ayodhya.

Ramayana consists of around 24,000 verses divided into seven Kandas (sections) namely Bala Kanda, Ayodhya Kanda, Aranya Kanda, Kishkindha Kanda, Sundara Kanda, Yuddha Kanda, and Uttara Kanda. Each Kanda deals with a specific period or phase of Shri Rama's life in chronological order. It contains the teachings of ancient Hindu sages and presents them in narrative with the presence of underlying philosophical and devotional elements. Each character is fundamental to the cultural consciousness of India.

धर्मज्ञः सत्यसन्धश्च शीलवाननसूयकः ।

क्षान्तः सान्त्वयिता श्लक्ष्णः कृतज्ञो विजितेन्द्रियः ॥

(Rama knows all righteousness. He is true to his word and has good character. He has no envy. He has patience. He consoles those who are in troubles. He speaks good words. He has gratitude. He keeps senses under control.)

~ Ayodhya Kanda

The epic Ramayana has been a source of inspiration not only in India, but also in the western world. In 2012, the then British Prime Minister, David Cameron said, “*The Ramayana is a good lesson for good Governance....In the epic Ramayana, we are looking at how we give people protection, affection and correction.....And I think that is a good lesson, because that is what good government should try to do and that is what we should try to do in this country (Britain)*”. (The Hindu 2012)

Dwapar Yuga

Mahabharata is one of the two major Sanskrit epics, the other one being Ramayana. For a lay reader it may seem to narrate the struggle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas for power culminating into the Kurukshetra War, but a deeper inspection and step-by step analysis brings to light much more... Believed to be written by Vyasa, there have been many attempts to trace and unravel its history. According to one source, it was compiled between the 3rd century BCE and the 3rd century CE and reached its final shape sometime around the Gupta period (4th Century CE).

धर्म एव हतो हन्ति धर्मो रक्षित रक्षितः
तस्माद्धर्मो न हन्तव्यो मा नो धर्मो हतोऽवधीत

(Justice, blighted, blights; and justice, preserved, preserves; hence justice should not be blighted, lest blighted justice blight us.)

~Śānti Parva (109.11)

The concept of ‘*dharma*’ is discussed in the Mahabharata in its etymological sense tracing to its root verb ‘*dhr*’, which means to hold, sustain, or preserve. Thus, it suggests that dharma is that which holds a society together implying a set of duties assigned to each person relevant to his or her position in