

Rajdharmā: Concept of Good Governance in Ancient India

Dr. Babita Maji

Assistant Professor

Department of Political Science

Raghunath Girls' P.G. College

Meerut 250001 U.P. India

Email: majibabita225@gmail.com

Dr. Anjali Gupta

Assistant Professor

Department of History

Raghunath Girls' P.G. College

Meerut 250001 U.P. India

Email: guptaanjali18874@gmail.com

Abstract:

Managing the government effectively is referred to as good governance. Governance is a fundamental component of all societies. It has been beautifully explain in ancient Indian political thought. Rajdharmā controlled all of the ruler's actions and was a code of behaviour that superseded his volition. Ancient Indian texts in Sanskrit and Pāli, such as the Vedas, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Bhagvad Geeta, Shantiparva, Nitisar, Arthashastra, Digha Nikāya, and Jātaka, all describe good administration. The purpose of this chapter is to trace the idea of good governance in ancient Indian concept which consists accountability, transparency, responsiveness, consensus-building, involvement strategy, the rule of law, and effectiveness and efficiency. This paper also attempt to reconcile the political concepts and Ideas which leads to good governance which is required even today's globalised world.

Keywords:

Good Governance, Statecraft, Diplomacy, Polity, Ancient Indian Literature, Rajdharmā, Dharma, globalised world.

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Dr. Babita Maji

Dr. Anjali Gupta

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Introduction

Human concern for good governance is as old as civilization itself. The recent concern about good governance developed in 1989 after the World Bank report published on Sub-Saharan Africa, which characterized development issues as a governance crisis, provided significant fuel for the current preoccupation with good governance within the development paradigm. Poor governance is responsible for lack of development in sub-saharan African nation -states. In 1992 the World Bank introduced good governance as part of lending to developing countries.

According to the UNDP, good governance is inclusive, egalitarian, responsive, transparent, responsible, consensus-oriented, participatory, and compliant with the law. It continues by saying that effective governance makes sure that corruption is kept to a minimum, minority opinions are considered, and the opinions of the most vulnerable members of society are heard while decisions are being made. Additionally, it adapts to the requirements of society both now and in the future.

The idea of a welfare state and good governance may be found in our ancient Indian ideas. It was discovered that rulers were bound by Dharma, also known as Rajdharma, which precisely means potential in good governance to the people. Rajdharma was the rule of law or code of conduct that overruled the ruler's will and guided all of his actions.

Rajdharma is the definition of governance in ancient Indian philosophy. It denotes the need to rule in a way that maximizes happiness for the greatest amount of people. In ancient Indian politics, the idea that the rulers were obligated to uphold Dharma was governing in order to provide the populace with proper governance.

All citizens have this fundamental right, and the government is required to give it. Since the concept of good governance is as old as Indian civilization, there is nothing new in the paradigms and concepts that are emphasized today. Raj Dharma was the "Rule of Law" or "Code of Conduct," which overruled the ruler's will and directed all of his acts. Rajdharma, or the king's virtuous duty, is the term for excellent administration in Indian system. It implies that individuals in positions of authority must uphold moral principles and treat the people fairly. Many societal shortcomings stem from a lack of effective governance.

Kootniti, which means "law of dealings," is the Indian term for diplomacy. Diplomacy is a crucial component of statecraft and is said to be as old as the idea of a state. Diplomacy has always been a part of Indian civilization. India had developed a sophisticated and mutually accepted tradition of diplomacy as part of its own ancient understanding of statecraft. It was both inclusive of India's many rulers and exclusionary of states outside the subcontinent's borders. The idea of Dharma, or

morality, served as the foundation for diplomatic practice at first. In ancient India good governance was looked as way of life, which demanded appropriate behaviour from all and was based on substratum of 'dharma'.

As a concept, Rajdharmā refers to the prudent responsibilities of the ruler towards his subjects. The fundamental care of the monarch and the king's safety is linked to the Praja Palan notion of theory. The goal of Rajdharmā was ensuring peace, justice, and prosperity for the people. The idea of Rajdharmā, as previously articulated, is still valuable since it promotes a successful, peaceful, and orderly society as well as moral behaviour in politics.

Almost all ancient Indian ideas, such as those found in the Vedas and Jataka stories, have a strong foundation in the concept of good government. Mahabharat, Shanti Par, Shukracharya Nitishaar, Valmiki Ramayan, Panini Ashtadhrae, Kautilya explains the idea of good administration.

Good governance in Vedas

As we begin to trace the origins of good governance in our Vedas, we discover that bahujan sukhai bahujan hitay is a dictum or aphorism that has been articulated in our sacred system. According to the Vedas, every member of a community should have access to the public benefit at no cost.

According to Yajurveda, which views on Rajya Sabha, Dharma Sabha, and Vidya Sabha as the three branches of the king's governance, the ruler must be dedicated to providing speedy justice and solve the problem. While understands the value of sound government the Brihadaranyā Upanishad places a great emphasis on the king's duty to uphold Dharma, or the public welfare, in order to ensure that all people have equal opportunities and that the powerful do not take advantage to exploited weaker section. Manusmriti has a prominent place in our study of it. The oldest and most famous text the Smriti, asserts that in the absence of a functioning government, anarchy will cause residents to flee in terror and the establishment of institutions for the subject's protection. This saying incorporates the rule of law and conveys the idea that individual rights will be safeguarded in an orderly society.

Good governance in Ramayana

If one reads the dialogue between Lord Ram and his younger brother, the advice that the lord has given his brother on how to run the kingdom will seem to be a great lesson on effective management practice while giving tips on good governance to Bharat. Rama dwells on several subtle aspects of administration. According to the Ramayana, the king must choose a right man, not the yes man. The choice must not be made hastily or after consulting a large number of people; rather, it must be made by a core group of right individuals who have the best interests of the group in

mind. The Ramayana talks about ramrajya, or ideal governance, and offers aren't still up the frictional art of leadership. According to the Ramayana, Ramarajya possessed every aspect of democracy. Even though there was no electoral process in place at the time, popular opinion was considered and given the weight it deserved. Despite Ramarajya's lack of a formal constitution, everyone had access to development opportunities and the right to equality. All were equal in the eyes of the law. Everyone was free in terms of religion and society. Even though Rama was in charge, everyone was free to express their opinions. Ramarajya established high standards for moral and ethical behaviour and addressed every facet of democracy.

In order to convince King Ravana not to go to war, Lord Rama dispatched Hanuman and Angad as his emissaries in the Ramayana. Even though King Ravana disregarded their pleas and intended to murder the envoys, diplomatic protocol forbade him from doing so.

Good Governance in Mahabharata

The idea of good governance is seen in the Shantiparva. The king looks out for the welfare of everyone in society and is able to manage the situation so that everyone in his state can live a prosperous life with the assistance of his government. Rajdharma, which includes the duties and obligations related to political and administrative appearances in shantiparva fees and security is maintained in the state only by the government. The government's primary goal was to provide justice to everyone on the basis of Dharma and without discrimination. If everything is run flawlessly and everyone in the state is content, then it's not just governance—it's good governance. As head of state, King will be in charge of safeguarding citizens and their belongings.

Following the Great War, King Yudhishtira went up to Bhishma, who was resting on a bed of arrows, and asked him to speak on the morals and responsibilities of the people, officials, and king: Making their subjects happy, upholding the truth, and acting honourably are the king's everlasting duty.

Good Governance in Buddhism Literature

"Good governance" is what the Pâli term "Dhammappasâsana" signifies. "Dhamma" (virtue, law, and righteousness) and "Pasâsana" (governance), which signifies the rule of government, are the two terms that make up "Dhammappasâsana." The Buddha's teachings illustrate how to promote development and practise good governance. The Buddha emphasizes in the Âgganna Sutta of Dîgha Nikâya that society evolves because of need rather than at the whim of divine forces. People are free to select the best capable and moral person to govern them. If he is subsequently found to be unfit and unethical, he might be removed from power. Crucially, his

accession to the throne does not guarantee that everyone would respect him unconditionally and without challenge. The monarch must rigorously uphold a number of values listed in the Pāli Canonical writings in order to ensure that he would be generally welcomed and respected by subjects.

A good ruler must adhere to the “tenfold virtue of the ruler” (Dasavidha-Rājadharmā). These are Sila (morality), Dāna (charity), Ajjava (honesty), Pariccaga (altruism), Tapa (self-control), Maddava (gentleness), Akkodha, (non-angry), Khanti (forbearance), Avihimsā (nonviolence). The king must, first and foremost, govern the nation morally. Second, the monarch must always enforce justice and safeguard all citizens of his nation with moral values. Third, he cannot allow immorality to destroy his dominion. Fourth, in order for them to have better lives, he needs to give them financial assistance. Fifth, he has to sometimes meet wise and moral recluses to gain a deeper comprehension of the Dhamma and promote moral behavior. Numerous parallels may be seen when comparing the qualities of a good monarch as described in Buddhism with those of excellent governance:

In Buddhism, a sacrifice-oriented system of governance is characterized as a system of good governance based on environmental dynamics, goal, work, human perception, behavioural code, and institutions with a system of accountability and participation at the grassroots level. After discussing the idea of good governance, it is clear that democracy or a decent society cannot exist without rigorous devotion to Buddhist Rājadharmā or good governance principles.

A just government is essential to a nation’s happiness. Two characteristics of the ideal Buddhist society are social justice and social welfare, where all activities, including industry and agriculture, should be just (Dhammika) through righteous ways (Dhammena), and the ruler of the nation receives training in righteousness with ten royal responsibilities (Dasa Rājadharmā).

Good Governance in Arthashastra

Insofar as it deals with issues of effective administrative and how it should be conducted in the best interests of the people, Kautilya arthshastra is by definition a treatise on state administration policy rather than theories of the state’s formation and operation.

The three main ruling officials and the administrative system may be used to categorise Kautilya’s perspective on governance. The protection of the populace is the king’s first responsibility. A good ruler must be well-educated, disciplined in science, committed to good administration of the people, and intent on doing what is right for everyone. Kautilyas-proposed values are still relevant today and are essential to effective government.

He claims that the people will be equally loyal to a powerful and energetic king, therefore with the prime minister's assistance; the monarch must be vigilant and awake and constantly monitor the behaviour and character of his ministers who oversee the various branches of government. The council of ministers, which may include as many ministers as may be judged essential or affordable, should debate matters before the state makes decisions or takes any significant administrative actions.

According to Kautilya's Arthashastra, a ruler must dedicate one eighth of his daily time to addressing the issues and worries of the general populace. In the most explicit declaration of the principles of good governance, a proper hearing should be given precedence in his realm. Strict guidelines for the behaviour and supervision of government officials are established by Arthshastra. It states that an officer may be relieved of his duties at any time if he fails. He ought to receive twice his salary in fines.

In addition to suggesting the mutual dependence of the state's components and the necessity of decentralising governance and transferring power to the local level of Janapada, Kautilya adopted a well-established seven elements of the state: Swami, the ruler, the minister, Janpad, the territory, the food fight capital, Danda, the army, and Mitra. Kautilya's Arthashastra outlines certain needs and applications, administrative processes, and signs of good governance that are still relevant in India today. Arthashastra portrays the king as a servant of the state who would have no personal preferences at a time of monarchy and justified ascriptive inequity. The aim of expansion, which leads to world conquest, is presented to the king by Arthashastra, which also outlines methods for achieving it. In order to guarantee Yogakshema and Lokasamgraha of subjects, a ruler must strive to be a Vijigishu, one who is eager to conquer new lands. In order to accomplish Lokasamgraha, which means to act in a way that benefits people, yogakshema means to safeguard the welfare of the state and its subjects, which implies happiness, prosperity, and peace for all. Kautilya coined the term "dharma" to describe societal and personal behaviour. Kautilya composed Arthashastra as a timeless, practical guide on governance and statecraft.

Conclusion:

Based on this Indian history, we can conclude that the concept of good governance is not new to our nation. There are several examples of diplomacy in ancient Indian texts. Rediscovering our cultural past, traditions, practices, beliefs, and values that have been meticulously outlined in ancient texts is necessary now. In the process of reinventing government, we must rely on the wealth of knowledge found in our ancient system, including the Ramayana, Bhagvada Geeta, Shanti Parva, Arthashastra, and others.

In Ancient writings, Rajdharmā defines good governance as “the duty of the king” and states that those who participate in governance and treat the people fairly have an unbreakable bond with social welfare and inclusive development. Lack of good governance has been found to be the primary cause of many social deficiencies among citizens, and all of government’s effects have been constructed in such a way that, if followed religiously, will improve the street of good governance in the current democracy.

National governments’ authority has been curtailed by globalization. International and multinational organizations now have more clout. Adopting the Indian idea of good governance in such circumstances might enhance public welfare and order. The idea that “the entire world is one family,” or Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, encourages inclusivity and world harmony. The AtharvaVeda, an Indian idea, places a strong focus on sustainable development methods. These values are demonstrated by India’s dedication to Mission Life (Lifestyle for Environment) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN.

The administrative framework and philosophy described in ancient Indian scriptures are consistent with the fundamental elements of the modern idea of good government. The welfare of the populace is the main goal of every government. Therefore, in order to develop SMART (Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive, Transparent) administration, it is vital to learn from the depths of ancient scriptures. India’s Pro-people Good governance (P2G2) concept also part of contemporary Rajdharmā to fulfill vision Viksit Bharat.

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