# GOVERNANCE IN INDIA: PROGRESS AND PROSPECTS

Dr. Rajkumar Bairwa[*]

## ABSTRACT

*The concept of governance is not a new phenomenon. It is being used in a variety of ways covering institutions/organisations working in both public and private domains in the contemporary world. The process of globalization has changed the world from closed economy to an open economy, from state-centric issues to people-centric and has also witnesses the changes and transformations in political systems, international relations, public administration, government and understanding of governance. Indeed, in the era of globalisation, the institutional changes have also been seen, from centralised to decentralised, has turned upside down. 70 years after independence and 67 years after the republican state, this is time, when we need to evaluate our progress and to find out more new ways to tackle the problems, we face in our growth path. Undoubtedly, there are many achievements which we can count since our independence which include self-sufficiency, in fact, surplus generation in food-grains, a rising life expectancy, a rising literacy rate, a united and integrated India and a growing recognition by the world of our capabilities and potential. However, we cannot close our eyes to the problems which herald our growth path which includes the problem of population, unemployment illiteracy, poverty and others. All such factors impact governance. This paper studies the concept of governance, and tries to analyse the years progress in India and the prospects in coming years.*

**Keywords:** *Governance, E-governance, Globalization, Civil Society, Progress, Decentralization.*

## Introduction
### Governance

The term governance is derived from the Greek word kubernao mean to steer or guide. Kautilya also known as Chanakya, was a minister the King Gupta. Kautilya in his work, Arthashastra, addresses the problem of governance and how can the Monarch or a kind overcome from those hurdles in order to exercise his duties, in order to have peace within the kingdom and on the borders and at the same time improve the economic welfare of its people. Bevir in his works argues that, "Kautilya Arthashastra can be considered as the first guideline for good governance although it may not be fully relevant for improving governance in a democratic set-up" (Bevir, 2012). "Modern times, the term governance can be describe as the process by which an organisation, especially a government, can formulates its policies, enacts appropriate laws, implements the various related programs and policies, evaluates, asses and modify them when necessary, changes the laws and programmes if needed and becomes accountable to the stakeholders/citizens and gets their mandate to govern.

Bevir further argues in his work, "at a broader level governance refers to all processes of governing, whether undertaken by a government, market or network, whether over a family, tribe, formal or informal organization or territory and whether through laws, norms, power or language" (Bevir, 2012). Hufty in his work explain the term governance and argues that, "it relates to the processes of interaction and decision-making among the actors involved in a collective problem that lead to the creation, reinforcement, or reproduction of social norms and institutions" (Hufty 2011). Thus, the term governance can be used for all organisations, formal or informal, and not just restricted to the government.

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[*] Assistant Professor, Political Science, Government Arts College, Dausa, Rajasthan, India.

Though governance is applicable to any institution or body, corporate, non-governmental organisations, among others, the worldwide interest began to focus on the governance by the government or what was called the statist view. "The term governance is distinguished from government, which is a formal body comprised of certain authorities to make certain decisions in a given political system. Governance is the process while government is the structure. In case of a government, the governance process includes the functions of the actors that involved in influencing the decision-making process, such as all citizens, political parties, media, the electoral process, elected leaders, form of government and is mainly concerned with the processes of the elected government and the bureaucracy that function together to implement the laws and regulations" (Hufty, 2011). In India, it refers to the processes of the three tiers of government constitutionally set up: the Central government, the various state governments and the local bodies, viz., the panchayats in the rural areas and the nagarpalikas in the urban areas.

In 1990s, "the topic of governance gained international attention when the World Bank commissioned the World Governance Institute (WGI) to develop indicators of governance and to apply them uniformly across all the countries of the world and rank them" (World Bank 1997). The working group of World Bank Group, working on governance indicators, has defined governance "which includes the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement sound policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them" (World Bank 1997). Good governance is considered as a key and essential ingredient of social and economic development, especially in developing countries.

In India, "a number of attempts have been made in the past two decades to study governance and the government and make them efficient" (Godbole 2014). Many articles and a few books have come out on the topic. "Prime Minister Narendra Modi has resorted the theme minimum government and maximum governance and emphasised the need to improve the efficient effectiveness of the government departments. He also called for a complete synergy between the Digital India Mission and the urban renewal mission" (Godbole 2014; Laxmikanth 2011). "This includes technological transformation such as mobile governance, e-governance applied to solid waste management, waste water management and others. There is a need for extensive brainstorming on such issues. Various attempts has been taken to bring e-governance and paperless government over the past few years. However, only a few systematic studies are available to quantitatively evaluate various dimensions of governance, to monitor them over time to examine the progress in governance taking up review of studies on governance in India, this paper briefly review the various definitions of governance given by the researchers from past two decades by which standards India and other countries have been assessed. As it will be seen in the research on governance, there has been no uniform definition of the term" (Modi 2014). Various scholars, academicians, practitioners tries to define governance. "Human Governance is governance dedicated to securing human development" (Malik 2002). Malik in his argues that the, "governance must enable the state, civil society and the private sector to help build capacities, which will meet the basic needs of all people, particularly women, children and the poor. It requires effective participation of people in state, civil society and private sector activities that are conducive to human development" (Malik 2002). Kaufamann et. al. in their work, defines Governance as the process in which institutions exercised their authority in a country. "Specifically, governance is the process by which governments are selected, held accountable, monitored, and replaced, secondly, the capacity of governments to manage resources efficiently, and to formulate, implement, and enforce sound policies and regulations; and the respect for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them" (Kaufmann et.al. 2002).

A common theme running across all definitions, though couched in different technical terms, can be stated as follows:

Governance can be broadly defined to encompass the following:

- It is politically circumscribed.

- It is multi-dimensional and the indicators selected in each dimension may change over time.

- It is a process by which the governments realise the goals set for themselves, effectively and efficiently within the time specified.

- It considers the common good and development of the society as a whole without generating gross inequities and without violence and corruption.

**Challenges to Effective Governance**

A common refrain, particularly when take a critical look at the state of affairs in the country, has been that the quality of governance needs much to be desired. "Those in the government, continue to feel that they are doing a fine job and nothing could be better. The citizen clearly feels otherwise. This mismatch in the perceptions of the people and the government is reflected in the credibility gap which exists between the citizen and the government". (Hyden. G, Court J and Mease K 2004).

"The scenario is changing very fast. This could be interesting ask as to what would be the shape and contours of governance in India twenty or twenty-five years from now. It is appropriate time to put such questions to ourselves because the time-clock is moving fast and we have already glided into the third millenium" (Hyden. G, Court J and Mease K 2004).

By now, we have added another 20 million. May be, by the end of the year, we would add another few millions to our population. "Compare this with the total population of a country like Switzerland which has no more than 7 million people. Our annual addition of 15 million plus would match the total population of a country like Australia and many others. Rising population throws up new challenges and problems of its own.Unfortunately, it does not seem to us that such ever increasing numbers can be fully utilized, can be properly educated and trained, and can be really turned into an asset" (Gupta, M. C. 2001). The increasing population has created everlasting social pressures. The latest literacy levels indicate that we still have over 350 million illiterates in India. This number is larger than the total population of any other country in the world except China" (Gupta, M. C. 2001). Unemployment is the other critical problems which is inter-related. Even if we assume that the number of people below poverty line has dropped to 27% or so (as per the latest Sample Survey). Literacy, poverty and unemployment present an inter-related syndrome which is depressing and worrisome.

The average life expectancy is around 65 years now and the way health care facilities are expanding with better income levels and access to Medicare, the life expectancy may rise between 70 and 75 by 2020. "If India's population reaches 1.3 billion by 2020, number of people above 60 years of age, which is normal age for retirement, would be a few hundred million. A huge army of old and retired people will have its impact in social, economic and financial terms. Pension liability would increase, particularly when we do not have the culture of maintaining separate pension funds" (Gupta, M. C. 2001).

From the last two decades, we have seen a massive explosion in information technology across the globe. The heavy-duty computers have given way to sleek devices and the Laptops. The growing transparency and right to information has extended the new pathways in the process of governance, giving more transparency and interface between the citizen and government It is in this context that one has to analyse India's governance in the present tense and the future of the governance in our country" (Gupta, M. C. 2001) .

India shall continue to be a union of States as envisaged in Article 1 of the Constitution. "However, our quasi-federal structure is very likely to become more and more federal in character implying that the States and the constituent units of the Union may acquire greater muscles" (Srinivasan K. M. S. Selvan 2015). "The demand for autonomy may not be acceded to in the way it is understood. But of the three concepts autonomy, devolution and decentralization, the latter two become more pronounced. One major achievement of the last Fifty years is a better integration of the constituent units of India and this process of integration is likely to become even more effective" (Srinivasan K. and M.S. Selvan 2015).

The last couple of years have witnessed a rising in demand for strengthening of the civil society. This emphasis emanates from a number of factors and is global in its expression. The citizen influence decision making because therein lies the essence of democracy. After "the adoption of the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution, the states have enacted follow up legislations for the setting up and functioning of the Panchayati Raj Institutions and the urban local bodies," (Laxmikanth, M. 2011). Simultaneously, the empowerment of the urban local bodies and the panchayati raj institutions and the strengthening of the civil society, the empowerment in the people become a major factor in the governance of the country. The move for transparent administration, accountability and citizens' charters are steps in this direction. The three organs of governance, namely the political masters, the judiciary, the permanent civil service and the legislatures playing an important role from two decades" (Laxmikanth, M. 2011). In this context, the civil services shall still be there: in the present form or in a modified form is the question. The major responsibilities of the civil services are not likely to change much in the next few decades. However, what is bound to change and that is already happening, is their internal composition, the objectives set for them, their orientation and their interface with the civil society.

**Conclusion**

There is urgent need of the political executive, the civil services, the legislature and the judiciary have greater role to play in coming years. Despite the truth, there is an air of confrontation and adversarial relationship, the role of these players is growing over the period of time. As far as the structure of government is concerned, one does not envisage any major change. The basic structure of the constitution and the basic features of the constitution, vertically and horizontally, shall remain intact. Of course, the civil society will have a greater share in the management of the affairs of the society.

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