

## **Good Governance, Ethics and Religion**

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### **Abstract**

Governance is a sophisticated system of interactions between structures, customs, responsibilities and actions which can be discussed through three variables of transparency, accountability, and co-operation. In good governance, a complex of values, processes, and moral institutions are utilized to satisfy human needs, resolve conflicts, and develop the society. Besides various criteria by which good governance is evaluated, the word “good” carries a sense of right and wrong or just and unjust, the very core of religious teachings that basically endeavor to bring individuals, societies, and rulers under the discipline of moral ethics, one of its fundamental elements. So abiding by moral values, as also persuaded by religion, will result in equality, efficiency, clarity, and other attributes of positive variety in the way the society is governed and the result of such governance, many of which can be named as defining criteria regarding good governance observed by administrations such as the World Bank. This paper aims to elaborate on the term “good” in religious teachings and recognize what constitutes good governance in response to main questions of the discussion regarding the position of good governance in religion as well as its relation to moral ethics through a descriptive-analytic method. As expected, the results show that the innate righteousness of religion when applied to human life will realize the notion of good, and, in the case of the rulers, good governance where prime obligations such as transparency, accountability and co-operation, attention to public interest, and facilitating development can be fulfilled.

**Key Words:** Good governance, Ethics, Responsiveness, Public Interest

## Introduction

The Greek word “kubernan” (to leadership and guidance), mentioned by Plato to describe a governance system, is the root of good governance. In the Middle Ages, it was converted into “gubernane”. It meant governance and illustrated ruling practice (Garcia, 2007). In the 1980s, the issue of good governance entered the literature of development and demanded the infrastructure to move from the government towards good governance. Indicators such as law orientation, consensus orientation, participation, human rights, accountability, responsiveness, and clarity were presented as the foundations.

Good governance is based on the collaborative management and challenges the authoritative policy of the central government, providing a condition where appropriate decisions are not made to manage the affairs of people, government and governors, and all stakeholders playing a role in decision-making (Midri & Kheirkahan, 2004).

There are two paradigms in managing public affairs. In the first, government is the main foundation of the society that and is responsible for everything. As such, it is to provide comprehensive public service and implement policies and programs to address all public demands, whereas in the second paradigm, where good governance is discussed, the task is assigned to government, civil society, and the private sector, and advances in a collaborative manner through constructive interaction between the mentioned three sectors on one hand, and between the above sectors and people influenced by their practices and procedures on the other.

These three institutions (government, civil society, and the private sector) are considered among requirements of human development and their relationship is to be in a way that excessive weakness or strength cannot disrupt social balance. This is why vast and continuous interaction and the division of tasks would provide people in a community with an optimal environment (Razmi & Sedighi, 2012).

Good communication and constructive interaction between elements of good governance prepare the grounds to protect the public interest. In good governance, means and measures are equally as important as objectives. Despite their being vast with various aspects, all objectives concentrate on priority of human, human rights, and achieving sustainable development in favor of the public interest. To achieve the objectives, any society tries to elect appropriate methods to meet the public demands (Araee, 2009). Civil society is seen as the public domain between government and economy where volunteer associations can discuss public or private subjects that are of interest and try to establish connections between them. This means civil society enables an active public domain. (Nash & Scott, 2009b).

Public domain is the basic framework of democracy and this is followed by a governor able to meet equality, freedom and liberty, the needs of citizens, defense of the public interest, and moral development to other governors. The possibility to make effective decisions is provided in a way that the benefits of all sectors of the community are exercised (Giddens, 2008). Civil society as an undeniable part of good governance considers the main criteria of good governance, including accountability, participation, clarity, and accountability. For Habermas, public domain is very important because by power the population is free from political and economically profit-driven pressures. He believed the domain relationship as public is based on a type of inter-subjective rationality (Nash & Scott, 2009a). Christians' important attitude on rational recognition is based on moral principles. The attitude obliges man to abide by moral principles and is completed and not contradicted by additions through revelation (Motahari, 2003).

Thomas Aquinas, a Catholic philosopher, believed that to achieve salvation, the fundamental issue is human behavior and action originated entirely from ethics. In theory, the attitude is examined carefully, for humans becoming worthy of attaining the absolute good should do actions through which human nature can flourish. The important issue is that

essentially there is no distinction between divine and nature rule because the nature is an expression of God's will, and actions done by humans to achieve absolute good are compatible with nature (Zagal, 2007).

Moral system has a deep connection with the religious system, religion is a way of life providing useful guidance to mankind's conduct in three fields of belief, ethics and practice. Practical and ethical ideas provided by prophets to guide mankind provide human happiness in the two worlds (Tabatabaei, 1984a).

According to the above, all three sectors of good governance are aimed at mankind's happiness and public interest, using ethics as one of the most important religious guidance to satisfy good governance indicators in the national and international world.

## **Literature Review**

### **Good Governance**

The idea of good governance was implicitly presented by the onset of United Nations cooperation programs in the field of Human Rights (1955) aiming to present programs to strengthening institutions involved in ruling practice. However, clearly when it became widespread in the 1980s, this happened by leveraging some powerful international institutions. Actually, it was emphasized in the process of development assistance in the form of financial and technical assistance, bilateral and multilateral cooperation on development projects and loans, and so on.

Good governance includes individual-institutional and public-private measures and performance for public affairs' planning and administration, an ongoing process for creating understanding between conflicting and different people interests, including formal and informal institutions (UN Habitat, 2002).

The concept of good governance was raised in the UN Charter and international law and under the support of the United Nations. This concept was widely welcomed in 1990 against the government model. Government imposed costs to executive countries' economy and the global economy, and many political units faced with poverty, inequality and inflation (Midri, 2006). It was confirmed that those governments had no ability to provide optimal conditions for the people. To consider the public interest and improve their lives, governments would need a set of policies which might differ from one country to another.

Four basic issues for good governance include:

**Participation:** Participation is the cornerstone of good governance that, directly and indirectly through legitimate institutions, plays an essential role in good governance between the government and elected representatives. Of course, here organized participation by civil institutions is concerned.

**Transparency:** Easy access to information and flow of information through press freedom are needed for clarity through which press freedom leads to knowledge of people of decisions made by executors and helps the people participation in the programs and development by analyzing the decisions and policies by the administrative system of the country. Clarity of decisions and implantation according to rules affect easy access of people to information, providing them with meaningful information.

**Responsibility:** In good governance, organizations and institutions should serve stakeholders and be responsible for duties. Any problem with the crisis at the community level should be managed by the related organization and there is no problem that someone is not in charge for it. Projection and conspiracy are always used to evade the responsibility.

Accountability: Institutions and organizations are accountable for their actions and procedures for people who are affected by them. People have the ability to hold those who are responsible for public affairs. Things such as political and social freedom and equitable distribution of wealth and power, governor of social class and the like are evaluated under the above title. Accountability is a main criterion for good governance. Not only governmental institutions but also the private sector, civil society organizations and institutions and NGOs should be accountable to the public and stakeholders, varying according to the type of decisions and activities of organizations and individuals. However, any organization or institution is accountable for those affected by their activities or programs. It should be noted that accountability is implemented through clarity and the rule of law. (Azghandi, 2001, p.119-155)

World Bank defined good governance with six indicators and based on these indicators evaluated good governance status during 1996-2006 every two years in different countries and since 2002 annually. These indicators include: (Kaufman, Karry & Mastruzzi, 2006)

Effectiveness and efficiency: Good governance means that processes and institutions act in line with the community needs and make the best use of their resources. This means the proper use of natural resources for sustainable development and also the environment preserve and not only the technical meaning is considered (World Bank, 1994) Here, the use of technical skills and bureaucracy efficiency are important. Government revenue is from taxes and other government's revenues, national political innovation implementation, timely annual budget and solve domestic problems are evaluated.

Inclusion and equality: Health and welfare are achieved in a community when all members have a sense of belonging to the community, understand and affect the development, this is achieved only by creating a proper opportunity for vulnerable groups to improve living conditions and welfare (UN Habitat, 2006).

Political stability and absence of violence: The index examines continuity of political life of political system over time, internal and external stress, changing leadership, political consistency and lack of violence provide a proper environment for economic growth. Political consistency is obtained when equality and justice are dominant, strong and cultural contradictions are reduced and political protests and social unrest are minimized as possible. Leadership should be changed through peaceful and legal measures.

Rule of law: a fair legal framework is a requirement of good governance. Supporting the rights of individuals and various minorities is imperative, hence, the inevitable need for a fair and independent justice system accompanied by an incorruptible executive force.

Quality of regulation: Rules and regulations are required for success in the field of development, and economic and political reforms for a good governor. Work rules, financial, tax, commerce and trade should be consistent with economic activities growth.

Control of Corruption: There are many factors in this regard. The level of corruption in the country is using power to benefit friends, family and relatives, expand bureaucracy for its misuse, payments made to influence legislation process, the use of public resources by government officials and personnel, eroded trust in the performance of government officials, illegal payments and monopolies to the detriment of other businesses is what good governance endeavors to reduce or eliminate. UN economic and social commission in Asia

and Oceania defined the principles of good governance as well as factors strengthening those principles and announced that by applying the principles governments can take effective steps toward sustainable development. Accountability, clarity, rule of law, consensus oriented, efficiency and effectiveness, inclusion and equality, since between consensus oriented, equity, and inclusion indicators to World Bank there is a little difference, the Commission explained that the purpose of the consensus oriented in a community is that good governance mediates among different types of actors and views in the community for the best interest and greatest for the community and to access a maximum consensus agreed. In the inclusion and equity index it is argued that the welfare of the community depends on its members feeling of being included in division of resources and interest in the society and not being rejected from the main current. This is where most unfortunate and vulnerable groups have the opportunity to access welfare and contribute to its expansion and growth.

### **Governance, Civil Society and Development**

Although different in concept, civil society and public domain are in total collection in contemporary theories, especially the ones stemmed from Habermas's work.

Civil society refers to the processes of social distinction in European societies the political power had been separated from other activities the political power had been separated from other activities in a way that distinguished government's domain from others. Political philosophy of the seventh century recognized civil society as the basis of good governance (Nash, 2001)

Since public domain constitutes the main framework of democracy, common democratic practices which consist of parliament and parties fail to provide sufficient grounds for collective decision-making. Therefore, amends can be made to incorporate stable participation of the pillars of society and other local groups and bring new life to society (Giddens, 2008).

The concept of civil society in development deals with human connections and interactions and follows the mutual co-operation between the members of a society as well as political, social, and economic structures. Development policy makers recognize that engaging citizens and civil society can complement government's efforts to promote good governance. (Bhargava, 2015)

According to Mary Robinson, senior commissar of human rights, good governance is the process through which governmental institutions handle public affairs, manage resources and guarantee human rights. She believes goods governance is the flawless law-oriented application of these activities (Alizadeh, 2008)

Considering the change in the role of government, a new paradigm was introduced to development where the prospect of sustainable development was achievable through interaction and co-operation between all sections of civil society.

The above mentioned model is a response to new global conditions and aims to achieve sustainable development while emphasizing human rights and supporting privacy against vast public or political domains who challenge public interests. (Monavarian, 2005)

In three decades from 1950, development paradigms failed to address the needs in developing countries, and economic models collapsed one after another all over the world with no discrimination between east and west. Eventually, a new approach was presented in which legal, structural, and ethical aspects preceded the economic one, yet the social-economic chapter was bolder (Midri & Kheirhahan, 2004).

Sustainable development is the main axis of plans devised by international institutions. Preserving the environment, abolishing poverty, incising literacy, knowledge, awareness, and health cannot be realized by industrial age development models. Therefore,

measures are needed to protect public interests while providing for the private sector (Razmi & Sedighi, 2012).

Development is a multi-dimensional process implemented by man to optimize all aspects of their social and individual life. It requires fundamental transformation in socially built national institutions, and general perception to improve basic demands and needs of individuals and social groups within a system from undesirable conditions to anything better in materialistic, spiritual, legal, and ethical terms.

The theory of consultative democracy and the theory of radical democracy by Laclao and Moofe testify to the importance of politics being understood outside of formal government institutions and offer thoughts on how to channel such potential in favor of greater democratic participation. Both rhetoricians view social powers and their activities as modern forces in contemporary politics who provide possibilities for new forms of cohesion and participation. It's especially important because further advancements of evolution and fairness in social life occur only when materialism and bureaucratic structures spread more responsibly in terms of democracy. Such goals are achieved when modern forms of social cohesion are realized (Nash, 2001). The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 1997 defined good governance as utilizing political, economic, and bureaucratic power to manage a country's public affairs on every level via which citizens and various assemblies in society express their interests, claim their legal rights, perform their assignments and obligations, and resolve their issues through mediation.

Also in 2002, the United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) emphasized that interactions between the pillars of good governance enables citizens, groups, and social institutions to pursue their public interests and put their legal rights into practice while concentrating on decisions being made and implemented by official or unofficial players. (Gholipoor, 2004)

As a main principle in democracy, people reserve the right to rule, meaning their decisions cannot be scrutinized, as their will is determining, their choice is commanding, and their opinion is to be respected, so the ultimate power belongs to the people (Bashiriye, 2002).

Civil society and the private sector are another foundation of good governance. Government prepares political and legal environments, the private sector provides jobs and income, and civil society facilitates social and political interaction between parties participating in social-economic activities and social matters. Good governance is not only a new narration of concepts such as democracy, human rights, accountability, participation, and low orientation but also offers a framework for all of these goals and values so that human development prospects including economic, political, social, and cultural development can be realized with people at its center. A good governor is the narrator of human-oriented development (Monavarian, 2005).

## **Basic Theory**

### **Governors' Ethics from Scholars' Perspective**

A government that wants to make a community prosperous its first objective should be creating an environment where ethics and knowledge, and in a word, philosophy, are able to grow, otherwise any other objective is subsidiary and worthless.

According to Plato, training a person cannot be done in a community if political and social achievements cannot, firstly, be a model for people and, secondly, provide the possibility to train them, and the family training would be useless. Hence, when life is based on an incorrect basis there is no hope that people can enjoy proper training. Therefore, the

government (political community) is the only national factor able to provide the means for good victory (Plato, 1974).

Plato desired to be involved in politics, but due to unfair behavior of governors and the trial of Socrates, quit it. According to him, the governors should be of legal scholars and practically aware of the secrets of human existence (Plato, 1974). He also believed a government that intends to lead a community to prosperity should be creating an environment where ethics and knowledge, or, in short, philosophy, are able to grow.

Al Farabi followed the Greek paradigm and the highest rank of happiness was allocated to his ideal sovereign. Walzar reminds us that both Plato and Aristotle hold that supreme happiness was only to be gained by those who philosophized in the right manner. For him, four things found in the community provide this world and other world welfare, theoretical virtues, intellectual virtues, moral virtues, and practical figures. He considered intellectual virtues related to social and political domains that play a role in enacting rules. The relationship between ethics, policy, and political power positioned in his teachings can be found from discussions on the balance (Enayat, 1982).

Imam Ali said: "Divine orders are the basis of morality and being close to God is the end of ethics, this policy provides the ground for all welfare, moral policy includes right orientation, considering human dignity, piety of policy makers, denying the power, faithfulness and numerous other issues."

Policy is a part of ethics and, if it deviates morality, has gone out. Any action that will lead to human happiness is good and bad otherwise. This is dominant in all political, social, and individual areas of human life (Jafari, 2000).

People play an important role in maintaining political systems. In Naseri ethics, a book regarding religion by Khaje Nasir Al-din Tousi, there is a dedicated chapter on people duties to the government, indicating that people are a part of the government and if people participate in it, it is efficient and consensus is governance origin (Rezvani, 2010).

#### The relations of religion, morality and reason

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism of Max are the best evidence on the relationship between religion and morality. No thinker and student before and after Weber conducted a study in this field. For Weber, religions that have attracted large masses of followers had a decisive effect on world history (Weber, 1992).

Weber wrote a lot about the effect of Christianity on the history of the West, but the study of Islam was not completed (Giddens, 2008).

Weber considered Christianity as the religion of salvation meaning that, if men accept the religious beliefs and follow moral principles, they can be saved and blessed. Here, the concept of sin and being saved from sin by the grace of God is important and can provoke revolt against the existing order. Religious leaders like Jesus upraised and interpreted the teachings in a way that challenged the dominant power structure (Ibid. p.781).

Weber considered efforts of the believer as contentment and eastern seeking and considered worship as a way to salvation and contentment to be a sign of faith of the believer, leading to the accumulation of capital. In his view, the Protestant ethics caused capitalism (Weber, 1994).

Kant's considered ethics as the principle of reasoning and self-determination in a way that denied any dominion other than the will, meaning emotion, fear, hope, and authority of the natural and supernatural affairs for will. For this reason, Kant did not consider ethics as based on the religion but since the law makes ethics to consider the best goodness as a link between virtue and happiness, meaning through ethics' channel, we are forced to assume God and immortality of the soul, therefore ethics inevitably leads to the religion. This does not confirm the claim of anti-religious thinkers of Enlightenment. Kant in his later years entered

religion only to satisfy the servant. Reviewing Kant's works shows that, despite his disagreement with emotion orientation, he still believed in God as protecting his creatures. Friedrich Poulsen beyond this stated that the real objective of Kant's philosophy is to show the consistency between faith and practice, showing a person can be a realist thinker and a true one. Kant in the second introduction of Critique of Pure Reason wrote such criticism more than anything else is useful for religion and ethics in a way like Socrates, by proving ignorance of protesters ends all demonstrations (e.g. ethics, religion) and elsewhere he stated that I remove recognition for faith. (Mohammadrezaei, 1960).

Ki Berklor extracted the most important and ethical aspects in existence schools. He wrote to free people from illusion. He considered the religion as ethics' support. The conflict between the two is not confirmed and he believed that, if there is a conflict, we should consider the religion. The most important thing in the religion is God, like goodness or beauty, justice and freedom as the most important moral discussions, God beauty description is a moral discussion clarifying the mutual relationship between the religion and ethics. Good deeds and sayings agree with the wisdom. In fact, the perfection of God is based on reason (Tabatabaei, 1984b).

Good human life from the beginning has been the most important ideal of humans. People with a different tendency in belief and culture try to reach happiness and fight with any risk. The human experience proved the need of ethics as an important factor. In this way, the role of religion with moral orders as its most important element is still clear so elevation is considered as the most important objective of prophets (Garcia, 2003).

Plato considered a moral act belongs to the aesthetic field, on which the philosophy of religion is emphasized. So ethics is originated from a beautiful soul and this is seen in human tendency. Here we can say ethics belongs to an aesthetic field for the soul beauty is from human power (Sobhani, 1999). According to Plato, ethics comes down to two basic elements; Eudaimonia or Arête (arête:excellence) and Eudaimonia or well-being which are the virtues that Plato teaches to aim towards.

Zoroaster said: "The Lord I can be like those cause the world development and prosperity and your faithful man, the Lord of life and wisdom I can have your support when in doubt just consider you" (Azargashasb, 1972).

The pious and those who follow the divine goodness principle are close to God and try to advance the world and human. These have Good support as Zoroaster said or in other words those who help science advance provide others with welfare by their innovation and in a way cause the world advance and they are faithful servants of God and (Azargashasb, 1972). He stated that Asha is the law immutable, the law eternal, the cosmic law of order and harmony on which the entire universe is based.

In the view of Allameh Tabatabaei, ethical system is related to the religious system. God creates the world in such a way that leads to human happiness. Meanwhile, there are rules for humans to achieve this, and religious rules are based on the nature (Tabatabaei, 1984c).

Ethics is a part of the religion. Religion tells us to look for good qualities in life, and avoid evil (Tabatabaei, 1984a).

Allama divided the religion into three parts: beliefs, ethics, and practice, and wrote the religion creates a relationship between social life and obedience to God.

### Human evil and perfection

Human beings are created weak and imperfect so that he himself forms his existence. And by the power of his thought and will flourish his talents and achieve his worthy perfection. A part of the human talents and aspects of existence which is precisely what man



should acquire is ethics, the innate talent within man that guides him to excellence. This aspect should be nurtured and this type of perfection is realized through a moral system.

There are two different applications for ethics: ethics as a set of virtues and vices in personal, social, political and other walks of life, or, ethics as a set of propositions that label voluntary actions or virtues, with a good or bad, and correct or incorrect. (Motahari, 2003)

### **Conclusion**

Minimal government was unable to meet the public interest in these communities. A new paradigm considers governance beyond government institution and emphasizes the significant role of civil institutions, NGOs, and the private sector in the management of public affairs and interests of the people. Constructive interaction and proper relationship between the above three areas are the basis for human happiness and community development. Important components are considered in this case by authorities such as “responsibility, clarity, participation and accountability, which are considered by all three elements of good governance.”

The government creates a proper political environment, civil society provides an interaction between social, political, and economic groups. Forces for active participation of the people and private institutions consider employment and people's income and their material well-being and comfort. In practice, good governance actually creates a constructive interaction between the three sectors.

Clear and responsive democracy, governance, and management based on responsibility in all sectors of the community are essential to realize sustainable development. Achieving human and social development objectives of the third millennium is not possible without applying good governance.

Developmental objectives were presented in the form of eight indicators including eliminating poverty and hunger, primary public training, gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, maternal health, combating AIDS, malaria and other deadly diseases, environmental protection, and developing a global partnership. One of the most important objectives of good governance is development and democracy in its new concept, man's status, respect for nature, patience, and so on.

The institutionalization of the main components of good governance in the elements makes governance enable to focus on indices of achieving public demands and interests.

Good extensions in this type of governance is true, correct, right, pious and just that all are moral indicators. Enhancing ethics and moral values will cause legitimacy of governance efforts and activities among people. Ethics is the fundamental religious doctrine originating from the actions and paves the way for prosperity and happiness of individuals and community.

Establishing justice as the basis for religious teachings plays a prominent role in good governance. All communities have a legislation system to bring justice so that they can prevent people unfair behaviors and practices to their fellows, community and the environment and even in relation to animals. The legal systems are based upon opinions and beliefs of humankind and form moral beliefs and explain the meaning of life.

So we can say that good governance can achieve the demands of the people using ethics in a way that is equipped with the following facilities: Strengthening democratic structures in the community, establishing appropriate economic mechanisms to facilitate the development, respect for human rights, rule of law, effectiveness and efficiency of activities and performance, participation and consensus orientation, political stability, efficiency, impartiality and clarity of the judicial system and impartial arbitration process, reduced corruption and the use of power and public facilities for private interests, and national and international conflict resolution.

One of the Muslim religious rituals is to speak the phrase: “blessings be upon Muhammad and his descendants” and in most cases the same for all 124,000 prophets of God. Scholars in the matters of religion say that if 123,999 other prophets were contemporary to Muhammad, in the field of human conduct towards happiness and salvation through honesty, integrity, virtue, and justice-oriented behaviors and practices would have no disagreement with him. Bernard Shaw said today's world faces severe crises, widespread conflict, and injustice, if Muhammad was present, able to solve all human problems and disputes today and could provide peace and justice.

It is expected 124,000 prophets, owned by one of the headquarters of good governance, could fulfill their responsibilities and play a leading role in increasing awareness and explaining ethics as inseparable part of religion, in order to eliminate discrimination, poverty, inequality and injustice and contribute to restoration of human rights and institutionalization and implementation of all criteria of good governance that are entirely moral.

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