International Multidisciplinary
Research Journal

# Golden Research Thoughts

Chief Editor
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# E-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA: ACHIEVEMENT AND ASPIRATION

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**Abstract:-**Government is the foundation of every community and it is essential that it work in an effectual manner to ensure that the public interest of the community is duly met with sustainable growth and progress of the country as a whole. India is a developing country and has complete potential of becoming a global super power but this progress is being retarded by the ineffectivecentral governing system due to expansive geographical terrains and decentralized government.This can be rectified through adoption of e-governance initiatives across all the levels of the governance both at center and state levels. E-governance has started showing positive results in the developing economy of India. This indicates towards progressive stimulus of the e-governance. This paper has explored the e-governance prospects in the diverse community setup of India especially in the purview of social and political implications and has identified how it has implicated the social and political fabric of the Indian society and transformed it from its conventional deep rooted characteristics.

**Keywords:**E-governance, India, Government, Achievement, Social implications, Political implications.

## INTRODUCTION :-

The government of any country acts as the mainstay for every community. All types of governmentshavepublic welfare as its primary intention,its primary job being to warrant that the advantage of public welfare reaches to the downtrodden sections of the society as well. However, it is a painstaking task. The government needs to ensure that it conducts the administration function in an apparent and effectual manner so that the citizens are assured about the initiatives of the government. E-governance has the power to provide the requisite transparencyand accessibilityfor the citizens. Itis a blessing from technology that amalgamates political functionality with the technological ease. E-governance works on the assemblage of technological tools like internet, local area networks and mobile technologies and applicationsthat enable effectual service deliverables like prompt information accessibility and broadcasting, augmented administrative efficiency and better public services (Infosys, 2011).

E-governancecan be understood as a progressive and development practice which augments the manner in which government functions, disseminate information, encouraging active participation of citizens and extent services to internal and external clients involve government bodies, citizens, NGOs and international parties. Governments across the globe are upgrading themselves by coupling information technology advancements like Wide Area Network (WAN), internet, World Wide Web and mobile computing to communicate with citizens, business and various departments of the government (Obi, 2007). E-governance warrants improvised delivery of services to citizens, government employees and other concerned parties (World Bank, 2011).This practice fosters citizen engagement through interactive empowerment by allowing approachability to knowledge and information and making the government administrative processes more methodical and effectual in functionality by warranting transparency, convenience and empowerment (Bhattacharya, 2012). For accomplishing the e-governance objectives, there are few necessities. Internet connectivity is critical for e-governance. Moreover, accessibility of the services by the people should also be enhanced. Only then e-governance can be effectual.There is an imperative need for a team of skilled engineers to handle the entire process of e-governance and address the issues arising with time andalso consistently upgrade the system for better experience.The data on the government portals should be regularly updated so that the people get latest information and statistics which is the most helpful.This radical transformation of the governing system is impossible without investing a lot of funds. This can be acquired from both public and private sources of finance (Yadav and Singh, 2012).

E-governance has tremendous capability of speeding up the social, political and economic development especially in developing countries across the globe through its multiple advantages. This technology enabled platform makes the government more proficient, responsible, transparent and receptive to the needs of population along with making the entire administrative process more cost effective (Gregory, 2007). It results in substantial savings and a better and more consistent government-citizen interaction especially with the population dwelling in remote and rural belts of the country. The decision making and political processes have become more transparent and accountable with laying the foundation of a country's development in purview of political, social and democratic advancement (Piagessi and Sund, 2011).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### A brief history and growth of e-governance in India over the years

Most of the advanced countries have long back realized the potency of e-governance and gradually, it started gaining acceptance across the globe. On realizing the relevance of e-governance, the Government of India set up the Department of Electronics in 1970 (Gupta, 2010). However, the ensuing launch of the National Informatics Centre (NIC) in 1977, paved the way intended to e-governance in India by way of highlighting the potentialities of information and its dissemination. In 1987, NICNET - a national satellite-based computer network was set up which proved to be a breakthrough towards e-governance in India. It created an accommodating environment by employing IT (Information Technology) and CT (Communication Technologies) for facilitating e-government services on pan India basis (Ray, Gulla and Dash, 2011).In the subsequent times, with intensified computerization, telecommunication and internet accessibility, numerous e-governance initiatives were launched at both the district and state levels. In May 1998, a National Task Force on Information Technology and Software Development was instituted. In 1999, the Union Ministry of Information Technology was established. In 2000, to legalize the ICT(Information and Communications Technology) practices, IT Act was ratified by the parliament. However, the phenomenal development came after the Right to Information Act in 2005, which made it compulsory that government information like all cabinet verdicts, forms, procedures, projects, programs, schemes, tenders, quotation calls, notices etc. must be displayed online on the respective State Portals (Chakraborty, 2013). This act made all the designated Information Officers in their respective departmentsaccountable for providing the information asked for. E-governance in India scenario has registered a steady rise from basic to particular points of governance like improved service deliverables, more rational and transparent mode of administration and focus on citizen welfare (Kumar and Bhanti, 2012).

The growth of e-governance can be attributed the implications it has on the derelict social and political structures and infusing a ray of new hope into them. It has catapulted some social implications which are more than welcomed.

### The social implications of e-governance

IT is one of the critical tools which can transform any society by overcoming the adverse knowledge disparity in the community. This can foster a consistence revenue generation for all involved people. Also, e-governancehas constructive implication on the education, healthcare, financial services, vocational skills and accessibility to administrative knowledge to the public. E-governance is working towards democratizing decentralization by empowering people in multiple ways by eradicating intermediary exploitation in the production and supply chains and also enhanced government transparency and culpability.E-governance makes the government of a country more tactical, innovative and receptive (Pardhasaradhi, Chetal and Gupta, 2009).E-governancealso allowed better coordination between the government and the population with augmented communication and single window clearance. This all has a positive impact on establishing a progressive society in India (Sinha, 2006).E-governance can help in bridging the demographic gap between the rural and urban areas of the country by creating a citizen-centric and business-centric environment by way of establishing right kind of governance and institutional integration at state and central level. E-governance increases the collection of tax revenue generation as more people are willing to pay their taxes with easy methodology and improved functioning (Shah, 2007). E-governance has strengthened the voice of the society making it a stimulus for change and reforming democratic practices which will enable reengineering of government and cost-effective services which are in collaboration of citizens and the government (Remenyi, 2007). Thus, e-governanceprovides democracy its essence of "for the people, by the people". This has reformative impact on the political scenario of the country as well. This is further evident from the political implications of e-governance.

The impact of e-governance on the larger society in India can be characterized by the following table which collates information sourced from various e-governance initiatives taking place in India..

| Goal concerning social impact | Role of e-governance | Relevant example in the Indian context |
|---|---|---|
| Increased level of transparency and reduction of communication barriers between public and government | Rules of government are made clear to public through electronic medium.<br><br>All assets have to be publicly disclosed and budget is made available to the eyes of the public.<br><br>Action of civil servants is made available and accountable to the public. | Indiangovernment has created Central Vigilance Commission which is a website that documents the names of civil services officers (administrative and revenue) who have been charged with corruption. The public has the right to be informed impartially about such cases. |
| Reduction of existing level of corruption in the country | Processes are documented online so that all transactions can be monitored.<br><br>Civil servants are motivated to act as helpers/facilitators and not as gatekeepers.<br><br>Number of intermediary people has been reduced. | In Karnataka, an electronic record is maintained of all government transactions. The chances of corrupt practices are thus reduced.<br><br>CARD in Andhra Pradesh makes the travelprocess easier and simpler. The gate-keeping officials are removed. |
| Enhancing the speed and quality of delivery of service | Lesser time is now required to complete transactions.<br><br>Travelling costs is reduced for citizens who wish to process transactions with government.<br><br>Larger population sets can benefit from the service. | The BHOOMI system in Karnataka reduced the time required for procuring land title from 2 years to 30 days. |
| Empowerment of public | Hitherto un-served communities benefit from electronic channels to receive information and services.<br><br>The brokerage or the negotiating power of intermediaries is reduced. | Interstate check posts constructed electronically by Gujarat has increased accessibility of system for collection of fine amount. |

**The political implications of e-governance**

For the latest breed of policy formulators, e-governance signals the facilitation and dissemination of information between 3 major groups in the political context; public servants/ civil servants, political parties and the general public. The government-public interface has been strengthened by enhanced level of participative action on behalf of the public. However, it must be kept in mind that using e-governance measures are only helping the mass of people who know how to access a computer. The relationship between politicians and people have been affected in the sense thatnow there are direct tools with which a common citizen can communicate with a politician. The e-governance tools used in this case are online grievance handling mediums, video conferencing tools and complaint resolution websites. The Parliamentary website for India, for example facilitates the hitherto strained flow of information from the top down level. This website also produces a bottom up feedback channel for scrutinizating and analysis of legislative activities. The parliamentary website of India serves as an example to most developing nations. The menu of the website has all important information about LokSabha (house for people) and RajyaSabha (state council), budgetary implications, web address of all ministries, office address of ministers, actual profile of all political figures operating in India. There are currently 20 different party websites operating in India. The website www.bjp.org for example has history, ideology, acts, press releases of all information on political leaders of BJP. Politicians are now more conscious of image management and now have restricted scope for behind the door schemes. Similarly, other websites by other parties are www.samajwadi.party.org and www.cpim.org/cpim.htm however, a comprehensive system for evaluating what percentage of information is exposed and what is concealed is yet to be done.

In terms of politico-administrative implications of e-governance it can be said that IT driven political leaders have become bureaucratized and information technology public servants have become more politicized.

E-governance reforms are not only confined to the implementation of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) practices to enhance the collaborative interaction between the government and the society (encompassing market, civil society and citizens) but also foster political capabilities of the various political parties and practices in general to strengthen the factors of good governance like transparency, effectuality and accountability (Alsheshri and Drew,2010).E-governancehas enormous scope and when complimented with technological reengineering tools, can bring about

radicalchange and acceptance at all levels of governance and society. Thus, e-governance has made considerable implications on the prevalent political scenario of India (Bhatnagar, 2008).The transparency and accountability promoted by e-governance especially the Right to Information (RTI) Act have made the politicians and political parties to rethink about the persisting deep-rooted corruption and crime in the political corridors of the country. Now political parties need to present their accounts, manifestoes online which citizens can access and question. E-governance has eradicated the role of middle men and officers; this has reduced the persistent bribery practice of government officers and politicians.Also, adoption of e-governance practices by a few politicians compel the opponents to adopt better practices and the ruling party also encourage implementation of e-governance practices with the intention of retaining power. E-governance is functioning as a slow but consistent practice of making political parties and politicians accountable for their actions, both good and scrupulous practices. This way, it promises to improve the political scenario of the country which is essentially required for making India at par with the developed countries by way of making the bureaucracy more efficient, transparent and responsible (Bussell, 2012).

## EXAMPLES OF E-GOVERNANCE

E-governance has employed ICT to provide government and bureaucratic services to the all sections of the society in a very effective manner which saves considerably on time, money and efforts. Following are the few acclaimed e-governance initiatives undertaken in India:

**Bhoomi:**This model is especially designed for Karnataka state using Kannada language. It automated the land records and facilitated computerized record of Rights, Tenancy & Crops (RTC), essential for the peasants to acquire bank loans, settle land disputes etc. This has enhanced transparency and consistency, minimizingexploitation and harassment of poor peasants. This project is a boon for 6.7 million farmers covering around 20 million rural land records across 177 Talukas with the help of network of 203 kiosks (Dwivedi and Bharti, 2010).

**CARD:**Computer-Aided Administration of Registration Department (CARD) intended to computerize the entire land registration process in the State of Andhra Pradesh. For this, National Registration Act of 1908 was suitably amended by the Andhra government. Within 3 years, nearly 90 percent of the registrations were computerized across 214 registration offices in Andhra Pradesh. CARD was an instant hit because of its quality and time savings. Under it, 2.8 million titles of registrations were done with 1.4 million title search cases. This enabled precision in property valuation and effective document management system. The time saved was estimated at 70 million man hours valued at USD 35 million as compared to the investment of USD 6 million in CARD. Projects on similar intentions in other states are SARITA(Stamp and Registration with Information Technology Application) in Maharashtra and STAR (Simplified and Transparent Administration of Registration) in Tamil Nadu (Dwivedi and Bharti, 2010).

**Gyandoot:** was instigated by the government of Madhya Pradesh on 1st January 2000 to cater to knowledge needs of the destitute tribal-dominated rural sectors of the state. It was commendable in founding a connection between the administration and the people of the remote tribal areas. This initiative involved kiosks which provided information at very nominal price. These kiosks were administered by the local educated youth with basic computer knowledge. It provided the prevalent rates of crops at the local and other auction markets at a nominal fee of Rs. 5; land records are available at Rs. 15; applications for important certificates like domicile, income or caste certificates can be emailed at Rs. 10; any complaints to be made about basic amenities can be made at Rs. 10. Moreover, at many of these centres, information about government development programmes, grants, other information and miscellaneous services like horoscope, matrimonial advertisements, Xerox, STD booth etc. are also available (Singh, 2012).

**SARI:** Sustainable Access in Rural India(SARI) project in Tamil Nadu connected a group of 31 villages through internet by way of "Public Access Internet Kiosks". These kiosks were set up by private resourcefulness of local people who initiated the project and installed the requisite hardware and user-friendly software which were easy to comprehend by the illiterate rural inhabitants. This project was supported by government as well and its patronage escalated significantly. These kiosks facilitated the villagers to download application forms for caste, birth and death certificates and forwarding it to the "tehsildar" via email. This made the process quick. Moreover, a significant number of local youth works abroad, this project helps their families connect with them via internet and save substantially on phone bills. They now pay Rs. 25 for one hour of video chat. Also, free online counseling for farmers is provided by connecting to the experts from Tamil Nadu Agricultural University and other research institutes in the region (Monga, 2008).

**Sampark:** Union territory of Chandigarh, India's most planned city entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with IBM which led to setting up of "IBM e-governance solution centre" for administration purpose developing multiple e-government applications. Under this project, "sampark centers" were established at different locations across the city. These centers enabled easy payment of taxes and bills like water, sewerage, electricity etc., payment of postal challan, issuance of bus passes, senior citizen cards, birth and death certificates, space bookings, tenant registrations, domestic servant registrations, passport applications and telephone bills etc. This facility helped the people in cost reduction and saving time. This enabledeasy

governance from anywhere and anytime (Monga, 2008).

**Computerized interstate check posts in Gujarat:** This project became functional from 2000. All 10 check posts were commissioned in the same year. The operators at the check posts facilitate all these activities: levying of penalty for overloaded or over-dimensioned commercial vehicles that pass through the check post; verifying critical documents like the Vehicle Registration Book, driving license, state permit or national permit, pollution under control certificate, insurance documents and delivery documents, checking of vehicles, collection of taxes due etc. The computerization of check posts enabled identification of 26 percent more violations which resulted in a rise of 21 percent in the penalty collection. Even the revenue increased through pending tax at the check posts. These check posts were able to recover their investment within one year of operation. Also, the computerized check posts improved the traffic of Gujarat with reduced lower time at the check posts and illegal activities were also reduced significantly (Bhatnagar et. al, 2007).

**SETU-** The state of Maharashtra brought in the concept of SETU (meaning bridge in Marathi) that seeks to form an accessible bridge between political parties and the public. All the SETU centers are operational since 2001 and now different states have copied this e-governance model. The objective of SETU is to give citizens more information on services, government department information, state and central government agencies in a manner that is as transparent and reliable as possible. The whole process is taken care of through an established chain of SETU centers. The location of these centers are focused around the offices of the collector and the Tehsildar. The management of these centers is done by the SETU Society which promotes transparency and excellent procedural compliance in the administrative service meted by the government. The SETU setup has been divided into two levels; state SETU society and district level society. The state level apex body monitors a lot of the distric level SETU centers. Over 333 centers of SETU are operational in Maharashtra districts and about 50 different kinds of services are provided to citizens through this e-forum.

**DHARANI** in Goa was the very first electronically tracked land records system operated by the government in order to provide citizens with proper information about land rights. The current stage of this project is known as DHARANI-2 and is developed and run by NIC in Goa representing the initiative of Department of Settlement and Land Records (DSLR). DHARANI offers the following services

a)Providing textual and factual online solutions whose main focus is implementation of rural and urban record of rights for the Goan Government.
b)All the land records placed allover the union territory of Goa is now electronically covered to UNICODE for all 12 operational talukas in Goa.
c)The crop survey in Goa is now done in a digitized form and this preserves purity of data and saves on labour hours. All 187 talathis of Goa have been issued a netbook PC by the government which has digital solutions with cultivator enquiries and ROR information. The facility of biometric authentication is also provided. The DHARANI project has won the CSI-NIHILENT award in 2010 for its success.

The common service center or the Lokmitra Kendra is a project run by the Himachal Pradesh Government. There were plans of opening a staggering 3366 government centers at the panchayat level of Himachal Pradesh. The scheme in place right now has CSC acting as the service delivery nodal point in the public services and social services delivery sector for the rural masses of India. The Common Services Center are operated under the public private partnership. Its an integrated effort by local bodies, help center, government, institutions and public figures

LokMitra is also represented by the numerous e-mitra kiosks which have opened all across the state. These centers provide 24*7*365 days access to citizens who want to seek information about local utility bills. There is the facility of instant e-mail notifications in case any service alerts require to be brought to the citizens notice. The e-mitra login ID and password is auto sent to e-mail address given by Himachal Pradesh citizen. The focus is always on making utility payment easier for the average urban and rural citizen. Elimination of long queues, conveyance costs, communication barrier, bureaucratic barrier and corruption have been reduced by this e-governance venture.

**Summarization of e-governance initiatives from state governments**

| State/ union territory | E-Governance Initiative |
|---|---|
| • Andhra Pradesh | • E-seva, CARD, FAST and VOICE |
| • Bihar | • Sales tax admin management information |
| • Chattisgarh | • E-linking project, ChattisgarhInfotech Society |
| • Delhi | • Computerized RCS office, MIS for education, |
| • Goa | • Dharani Project |
| • Gujrat | • Mahiti Shakti, online form book, online G R book, notices for tender |
| • Haryana | • NaiDisha |
| • Himachal Pradesh | • LokMitra |
| • Karnataka | • Bhoomi, Kaveri, Khajane |
| • Kerela | • R D Net, Fat, E-srinkhala |
| • Madhya Pradesh | • Gyandoot, Computerised State Agricultural Marketing Board |
| • Maharashtra | • SETU, Complaint management system |
| • Rajasthan | • RajSwift, RajNidhi, LokMitra |
| • Tamil Nadu | • RasiMalyamsKanchipuram |
| • 7 sisters; Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram etc | • Community information center established for food supplies, social welfare, transportation, housing schemes |

Apart from these commendable state government initiatives, there are some e-governance initiatives by the central government of India, which have radically transformed the conventional tedious practices. Income tax is one such practice. The Income Tax department has instigated a comprehensive e-governance initiative, which enables individual taxpayers and companies to file their returns online, and services of the department are accessible anytime, anywhere. This allowed a single application running across the national database, providing PAN (Permanent Account Number) to citizens for authenticating financial transactions, electronic filing of income tax returns conveniently, Tax Information Network (TIN), enabling 18 e-services to tax payers by way of digitization and fast track refund banker scheme. This simplified the income tax process for all and brought in uniformity and consistency across the country. Moreover, it made it easier for the taxpayers to understand the process and access information conveniently (Indian Government, 2014). Likewise, Central Board for Excise and Customs (CBEC) revolutionized the conventional Central Excise and Service Tax formations through digitization. Automation of Central Excise and Service Tax (ACES) augmented tax-payer services, precision, responsibility and efficacy of the indirect tax administration in India (Indian Government, 2014). Unique Identification Number (UID) was much talked about e-governance project, which intended to enable identification of each citizen across service vertices and form the core of effective welfare services. Also, it will enable effectual supervision of multiple programs and schemes run by the government for people welfare. Apart from these, central government offices have been digitized through e-office software which systematized the workflow and file routing. Public sector insurance was also digitalized to expand its reach and business. To promote tourism in India, Immigration, Visa and Foreigner's Registration & Tracking (IVFRT) was created to increase its accessibility with ease. National Population Register, pensions, issuance of passports, banking and postal services are all on the information and communication technologies' platform to improve the public services in a country (Indian Government, 2014).

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper explored the presence and growth of e-governance in the diverse country of India which is deeply trapped with chronic issues of corruption, casteim, red tapism and bureaucracy. Thus, there is an ardent need for e-governancein the country. In India, economic diversity is highly persistent wherein some states are highly prosperous like Gujarat, Punjab while others are backward like Bihar, Madhya Pradesh etc. This warrants customized initiatives to meet the unique requirements of the states. Also, there is a need for integrative efforts by the central government which may align all the state level initiatives into one comprehensive program intended to promote better governing and system corrective measure.E-governancehas come

in as a fresh breeze clearing the rotting bureaucratic structure of the country. Acts like Right to Information (RTI), Lokpal bill have enhanced the transparency and accountability of the government departments and political parties. Online services save people of a lot of time and money and the multiple visits to the government offices. E-governance is making the political parties and government bodies more answerable to the public and with increased virtual visibility and accessibility. People are more aware due to access to the internet and social media. E-governance is making reformative changes in the social, political and economic framework of India.

Public services have benefitted immensely from the e-governance initiatives of the government of India. This is so because e-governance models and systems have streamlined the conventionally complex processes and enabled easy accessibility to the government information. The quality of service deliverables have improved and also the efficacy of the services have risen through standardization, extensive accessibility with more comprehensibility and accountability of the staff. Also, it is highly cost-effective and time saving for both the government and the citizens. Even digitized data storage is cost optimal and convenient. Also, there is no delay in work and duplication of work is minimal. Moreover, processes of data collection, analysis and audit are more robust and less tiresome. E-governance has prompted improved citizen participation in the governing process. Citizens find e-governance as a blessing for the society as a whole for it provides ease to complex processes and standardization (Kumara, 2010).

The explicit social implications of the e-governance can be comprehended from the tangible benefits facilitated by technological tools of governance. E-governance improves economic performance of a country through better revenue generation and reduced malpractices. This will give rise to employment opportunities in the country, catapult the business growth, foster small and medium enterprises, and cost of conducting business. From the perspective of political implications, e-governance can be viewed as a tool for increasing accountability, lucidity and responsibility of the government machinery and also the political system by increasing the participation and responsiveness of the politicians and opposition parties and citizens as a whole. This promotes the image of the governing bodies and political parties in power. E-governance can be seen as a source of gradual eradication of rural and urban poverty and promoting establishment of a knowledge society.

E-governance can be a boon in the healthcare and education sector especially in the rural and remote pockets of the country. It can also be helpful for farmers for agricultural reforms and sharing of innovations and expertise. Though it is being functional in some states but there is an ardent need to make it centralized so that the farmers across the country can benefit from it.

## CONCLUSION

India is on the threshold of becoming a global superpower but one of the major hindrances confronting India is the inefficient governance. However, with technological advancement and acknowledged need for better governance in the country to be at par with the global counterparts, India is trying e-governance initiatives to counter problems like poverty, illiteracy and poor infrastructure etc. Different states have come with unique projects which have gained international acclaimed as well. These e-governance initiatives have enabled the citizens to access the fundamental services with ease.E-governance is applicable at all levels of the system and is a boon to connect the remote areas with the mainstream administrationand benefits announced by the government. E-governance has also promoted the "green" governance as a lot of paper is saved in the processes. It has the power to transform the entire country as the functionality of the governing bodies will scale to newer heights. However, e-governanceinitiatives in India, althoughhighly disintegrated at present,but there is an ardent need to develop and execute a time bound plan to implement e-governance strategies in pan India manner to cater the public interest significantly.

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