AN OVERVIEW OF E-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

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"Government's foremost job is to focus society on achieving the public interest. Governance is a way of describing the links between government and its broader environment political, social, and administrative." - *Thomas B Riley*

Abstract: E-governance will allow citizens to communicate with government, participate in the governments' policy-making and citizens to communicate each other. The e-governance will truly allow citizens to participate in the government decision-making process, reflect their true needs and welfare by utilizing e-government as a tool. Governments are specialized institutions that contribute to governance. Representative governments seek and receive citizen support, but they also need the active cooperation of their public servants. Governance is the outcome of politics, policies, and programs. Governance is a burning topic for many reasons, including the changing role of knowledge and information, a trend towards networks as an organizational form, globalization issues and, last but not the least advances in ICTs. Like all the "e" subjects, E-Governance is about playing advanced information and communications technology to improve and support all tasks in the governmental domain. Public awareness and Digital divide is important issues to be addressed. E-Governance through regional languages is appreciable for the nations like India where people from several states are the participants. E-governance is not just the Internet as the common perception goes and governments need to move back in a certain sense, to re-appropriate the older communication tools like radio and cable TV. A critical mass of people is required to push e-governance to the next gear. In developing countries like India, where literacy level is very low and even most of the people are living below poverty line, people are not even aware about the benefits of e-Governance activities and people do not use Information and Communication technologies to a much extent, there exist a number of problems to implement e-Governance activities. The concept of 'good governance' as a result emerged in 1989 through a World Bank Report and thereafter the objective of attaining 'good governance' through various ways of 're-inventing' government started gaining much consideration. This paper attempts to trace the essence of e-government in the modern era of Indian Public Administration today as another new paradigm shift is in the offspring and slowly becoming distinct from the amorphous shape of Public Administration in the Indian context with the ICT-blessed governance, or e-Governance. This research paper highlights the main challenges related to the implementation of e -Governance in India

Introduction: E-governance is defined as a set of technology-mediated processes that are changing both the delivery of public services and the broader interactions between citizens and government. E-governance heralds unparalleled reforms in the processes and structures of governance. It offers scores of benefits to the government and its citizens and various other stakeholders. In India, issues of weak governance, poverty, and bureaucratic corruption among others could be arrested with successful application of e-governance. The electronically propelled reforms, therefore, are capable of engendering greater citizens' involvement in policy formulation, responsive governance and administration, besides, ushering global best practices that cultural and contextual compatible. Further, E Government is a channel through which the government interacts with its citizens (e-Citizens and e-Services), improves public service delivery and processes (e-Administration), and builds external interactions (e-Society). The emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has provided means for faster and better communication, retrieval of data and utilization of information to its users.

e-Governance is basically the application of ICT to provide government services to the citizens through internet. In developing countries like India, where literacy level is very low and even most of the people

are living below poverty line, people are not even aware about the benefits of e-Governance activities and people do not use Information and Communication technologies to a much extent, there exist a number of problems to implement e-Governance activities. The concept of 'good governance' as a result emerged in 1989 through a World Bank Report and thereafter the objective of attaining 'good governance' through various ways of 're-inventing' government started gaining much consideration. This paper attempts to trace the essence of e-government in the modern era of Indian Public Administration today as another new paradigm shift is in the offspring and slowly becoming distinct from the amorphous shape of Public Administration in the Indian context with the ICT-blessed governance, or e-Governance. This research paper highlights the main challenges related to the implementation of e -Governance in India.

E-Governance originated in India during the seventies with a focus on in- house government applications in the areas of defence, economic monitoring, planning and the deployment of ICT to manage data intensive functions related to elections, census, tax administration etc. The efforts of the National Informatics Center (NIC) to connect all the district headquarters during the eighties was a watershed. From the early nineties, e-governance has seen the use of IT for wider sectoral applications with policy emphasis on reaching out to rural areas and taking in greater inputs from NGOs and private sector as well. There has been an increasing involvement of international donor agencies such as DfID, G-8, UNDP, and WB under the framework of e-governance for development. While the emphasis has been primarily on automation and computerization, state endeavors to use IT include forays into connectivity, networking, setting up systems for processing information and delivering services. At a micro level, this has ranged from IT automation in individual departments, electronic file handling, and access to entitlements, public grievance systems, service delivery for high volume routine transactions such as payment of bills, tax dues to meeting poverty alleviation goals through the promotion of entrepreneurial models and provision of market information. The thrust has varied across initiatives, with some focusing on enabling the citizen-state interface for various government services, and others focusing on bettering livelihoods.

The role of information in all areas of the private sector and in government is now paramount for continued growth and stability in our societies. Information has become the lynchpin in the way we think, act and operate as a society. The significance of the growth of ICTs, new technologies, the Internet and the rapid deployment of information and creation of information is the "potential" for change these phenomena are creating. These are pressing issues for modern governments as the new technologies are contributing to the creation of faster communications, the sharing of information and knowledge, and the emergence of new forms of our respective cultures. Networked communities are quickly evolving through the Internet, and citizens are increasingly using the new technologies to organize themselves so their voices can be heard, and to develop tools to attempt to influence government policy and programs at the political and public administration level. It is important to put the whole question of how ICTs will be used to further engage the citizenry into a wider context of democracy as we practice it. The current trend of attaching 'e' to just about every topic (like E-Commerce, E-Learning, E-Health, E-Governance) is nothing more than a simple way to create a name for the use of information and communications technology to support the tasks within the topic. More importantly, the use of terms such as e-government, e-governance and e-democracy, leads to the creation of an identifiable discipline. This then widens the development of the subject beyond the parameters of simply government boundaries to the larger spheres of civil society, associations, unions, the business community, international organizations and the academic world. Governance is not a synonym for government.

Objectives of the Study:
1. To provide an overview of e-governance.
2. To examine the rationale and scope of e-governance.
3. To focus e-governance initiatives in India.
4. To evaluate the major challenges and future prospects of e-governance in India.

The traditional pattern and processes of administration have undergone critical analysis by this time. Its excessive dependence on bureaucracy, hierarchy, rules and regulations was proved to be ineffective in delivering proper services to the citizens and when the twenty first century was seen to be characterized by the impact of globalization which has the potential to transform the social, cultural, economic and political arena worldwide in one way or another, the net effect is the need for change and innovation in the delivery of public services. Since 1990s, the concept and practice "reinventing government" has been getting much attention among the advocacy for transforming the public administration. The concept of 'good governance' as a result emerged in 1989 through a World Bank Report and thereafter the objective of attaining 'good governance' through various ways of 'reinventing' government started gaining much consideration. The introduction of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) started to induce many changes in the way governments function and this paradigm shift in the information age has actually redefined the processes and mechanisms of service delivery.

Many developed nations have already taken steps to enhance the effectiveness of interface between the citizens and administration while majority of the developing nations including India are in the path of re-inventing the public service through the implementation of Information and Communication Technologies .As the usage of Information Technology is growing very fast, Indian government is making many efforts to provide services to its citizens through e-Governance. Although Indian government is spending a lot of money on e-Governance projects but still these projects are not successful in all parts of India. Unawareness in people, local language of the people of a particular area, privacy for the personal data of the people etc. are main challenges which are responsible for the unsuccessful implementation of e-Governance in India. Government must take some actions to make the people aware about the e-Governance activities so that people may take full advantage of these activities and e-Governance projects can be implemented successfully. The participation of people can play a vital role in implementation of e-Governance in India.

The term E-Governance has different connotations:
E-Administration: The use of ICTs to modernize the state; the creation of data repositories for MIS, computerization of records.

E-Services: The emphasis here is to bring the state closer to the citizens. Examples include provision of online services. E-administration and e-services together constitute what is generally termed e-government.

E-Governance: The use of IT to improve the ability of government to address the needs of society. It includes the publishing of policy and programme related information to transact with citizens. It extends beyond provision of on-line services and covers the use of IT for strategic planning and reaching development goals of the government.

E-Democracy: The use of IT to facilitate the ability of all sections of society to participate in the governance of the state. The remit is much broader here with a stated emphasis on transparency, accountability and participation. Examples could include online disclosure policies, online grievance redress forums and e-referendums. While e-government is defined as a mere delivery of government services and information to the public using electronic means, e-governance allows direct participation of constituents in government activities.

E-governance will allow citizens to communicate with government, participate in the governments' policy-making and citizens to communicate each other. The e-governance will truly allow citizens to participate in the government decision-making process, reflect their true needs and welfare by utilizing e-government as a tool. Governments are specialized institutions that contribute to governance. Representative governments seek and receive citizen support, but they also need the active cooperation of their public servants. Governance is the outcome of politics, policies, and programs. The strategic objective of e-governance is to support and simplify governance for all parties - government, citizens and businesses. The use of ICTs can connect all three parties and support processes and activities. In other words, in e-governance uses electronic means to support and stimulate good governance.

Therefore the objectives of e-governance are similar to the objectives of good governance. The impact that ICTs have in our society in general as well as on the nature, scope, understanding and practice of public administration in particular is immense. All the contributing authors in this volume, from different parts of the world, thus shed light on the way e-governance is operating as well as progressing, along with the challenges and constraints it still faces. Among many others, themes covered in the volume include citizens' engagement, cross-governmental partnerships, IT product quality, and anti-corruption – all relating to e-governance.

E-Government i.e. Electronic Government is the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to run or carry on the business of the Government of a Country. However the term E-government is misleading, as it implies an electronic substitute for the physical government. Electronic substitution of a government is not possible as Government is an unit of people coming together to administer a country. A Government is a group of people responsible for the administration and control of a Country/State. It involves people like the Heads of States, Ministers, Government Employees, etc. It also involves public participation. So, electronic substitution for a Government is not possible. Therefore, E-Government may only refer to a Government using in conducting its business. The term 'Governance' is wider than 'Government'. Governance may be an activity of governing/controlling a country by its Government, controlling of an organization or a company by its CEO or Board of Directors or controlling of a house hold by the head of the house, Accordingly E-governance may also involve governing of a country, organization, company or a household, however with the help of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

E-governance therefore means the application of ICT to transform the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of exchange of information and transaction:
1. between Governments,
2. between Government agencies,
3. between Government and Citizens
4. between Government and businesses

E-governance also aims to empower people through giving them access to information. The object of E-Governance is to provide a SMARRT Government. The Acronym SMART refers to Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive, Responsible and Transparent Government. S - The use of ICT brings **simplicity** in governance through electronic documentation, online submission, online service delivery, etc. M - It brings **Morality** to governance as immoralities like bribing; red-tapism, etc. are eliminated. A - It makes the Government accountable as all the data and information of Government is **available** online for consideration of every citizen, the NGOs and the media. R - Due to reduced paperwork and increased communication speeds and decreased communication time, the Government agencies become **responsive**. R - Technology can help convert an irresponsible Government **Responsible**. Increased access to information makes more informed citizens. And these empowered citizens make a responsible Government. T - With increased morality, online availability of information and reduced red-tapism the process of governance becomes **transparent** leaving no room for the Government to conceal any information from the citizens.

The Council of Europe referred to e-Governance as:
- The use of Electronic technologies in three areas of public action.
- The relations between the public authorities and civil society
- The functioning of the public authorities at all stages of the democratic process (electronic democracy)
- The provision of public services (electronic public services)

Reasons for Opting e-Governance: Governance per se has become very complex Increase in citizens' expectations from the government. Some of the initial steps taken were:
1. The establishment of the Department of Electronics in 1970 was the first major step towards e-governance in India as it brought 'information' and its communication to focus.

2. National Informatics Centre (NIC) established in 1977, launched the District Information System program to computerize all district offices in the country
3. The main thrust for e-governance was provided by the launching of NICNET in 1987 – the national satellite-based computer network.

Objectives of e-governance:
- Better service delivery to citizens.
- Ushering in transparency and accountability.
- Empowering people through information.
- Improve efficiency within Government i.e between centre-state or inter-states.
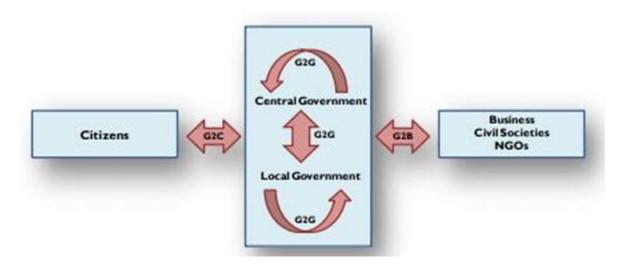- Improve interface with business and industry.

Pillars of e-Governance:
- People
- Process
- Technology
- Resources

Types of Interaction in e-Governance:
- G2G i.e. Government to Government
- G2C i.e. Government to Citizen
- G2B i.e. Government to Business
- G2E i.e. Government to Employees

Digital India Initiatives: It is an umbrella program to prepare India for a knowledge-based transformation. It weaves together a large number of ideas and thoughts into a single comprehensive vision so that each of them is seen as part of a larger goal. It has been launched by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY).

Vision Areas:
- Digital infrastructure as Utility to Every Citizen.
- Governance and services on demand
- Digital empowerment of citizens

Various Initiatives under Digital India Initiatives:
- **MyGov**: It aims to establish a link between Government and Citizens towards meeting the goal of good governance. It encourages citizens as well as people abroad to participate in various activities i.e. 'Do', 'Discuss', 'Poll', 'Talk', 'Blog', etc.
- **DigiLocker**: It serves as a platform to enable citizens to securely store and share their documents with service providers who can directly access them electronically.
- **e-Hospital-Online Registration Framework (ORF):** It is an initiative to facilitate the patients to take online OPD appointments with government hospitals. This framework also covers patient care, laboratory services and medical record management.
- **National Scholarships Portal (NSP):** It provides a centralized platform for application and disbursement of scholarship to students under any scholarship scheme.
- **DARPAN**: It is an online tool that can be used to monitor and analyze the implementation of critical and high priority projects of the State. It facilitates presentation of real time data on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of selected schemes/projects to the senior functionaries of the State Government as well as district administration.
- **PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance And Timely Implementation**): It has been aimed at starting a culture of Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation. It is also a robust system for bringing e-transparency and e-accountability with real-time presence and exchange among the key stakeholders. It was launched in 2015.
- **Common Services Centres 2.0 (CSC 2.0):** It is being implemented to develop and provide support to the use of information technology in rural areas of the country. The CSCs are Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enabled kiosks with broadband connectivity to provide various Governments, private and social services at the doorstep of the citizen.
- **Mobile Seva:** It provides government services to the people through mobile phones and tablets.
- **Jeevan Pramaan**: It is an Aadhaar based Biometric Authentication System for Pensioners. The system provides authenticity to Digital Life Certificate without the necessity of the pensioner being present in person before his/ her Pension Dispensing Authority (PDA).
- **National Centre of Geo-informatics (NCoG)**: Under this project, Geographic Information System (GIS) platform for sharing, collaboration, location based analytics and decision support system for Departments has been developed.
- **National e-Governance Plan (NeGP):** It takes a holistic view of e-Governance initiatives across the country, integrating them into a collective vision and a shared cause.It comprises of 31 Mission Mode Projects, approved in 2006, but later it was integrated into Digital India Program.
- **e-Kranti**: National e-Governance Plan 2.0

It is an essential pillar of the Digital India initiative. It was approved in 2015 with the vision of "Transforming e-Governance for Transforming Governance". There are 44 Mission Mode Projects under e-Kranti, which are at various stages of implementation.

Thrust Areas of e-Kranti:
e-Education: All schools will be connected to broadband. Free WiFi will be provided in all secondary and higher secondary schools (coverage would be around 250,000 schools).

PMGDISHA: Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan aims to make six crore people in rural India digitally literate.

SWAYAM: It includes Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) for leveraging e-Education. It provides for a platform that facilitates hosting of all the courses, taught in classrooms from Class 9 till post-graduation to be accessed by anyone, anywhere at any time.

e-Healthcare: e-Healthcare would cover online medical consultation, online medical records, online medicine supply, pan-India exchange for patient information, etc.

Farmers: This would facilitate farmers to get real-time price information, online ordering of inputs and online cash, loan, and relief payment with mobile banking.

Security: Mobile-based emergency services and disaster-related services would be provided to citizens on a real-time basis so as to take precautionary measures well in time and minimize loss of lives and properties.

Financial Inclusion: Financial inclusion shall be strengthened using mobile banking, Micro-ATM program, and CSCs/ Post Offices.
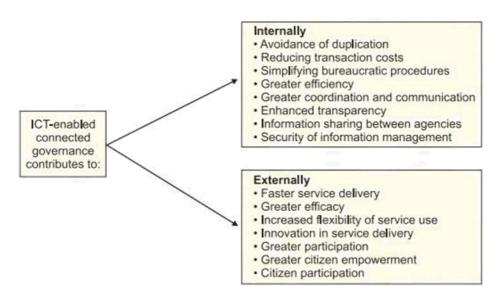
Justice: Interoperable Criminal Justice System shall be strengthened by leveraging several related applications, i.e. e-Courts, e-Police, e-Jails, and e-Prosecution.

Planning: National GIS Mission Mode Project would be implemented to facilitate GIS-based decision making for project planning, conceptualization, design, and development.
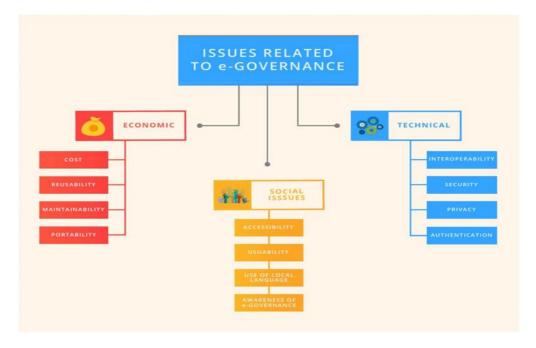
Cyber Security: National Cyber Security Co-ordination Centre has been set up to ensure a safe and secure cyber-space within the country.

Benefits/ Outcomes of E-Governance :
- Enhanced Transparency and Accountability
- Expanded reach of Governance.
- Improved Public Administration.
- Enables Environment for Promoting Economic development.
- Improved service delivery in the form of better access to information and quality services to citizens.

ICT-enabled connected governance contributes to:

Internally
- Avoidance of duplication
- Reducing transaction costs
- Simplifying bureaucratic procedures
- Greater efficiency
- Greater coordination and communication
- Enhanced transparency
- Information sharing between agencies
- Security of information management

Externally
- Faster service delivery
- Greater efficacy
- Increased flexibility of service use
- Innovation in service delivery
- Greater participation
- Greater citizen empowerment
- Citizen participation

Challenges to E-Governance:

Infrastructure: Lack of basic infrastructural facilities like electricity, internet, etc. Initiatives like BharatNet and Saubhagya are steps taken in this regard.

Cost: e-Governance measures are costly affairs and require huge public expenditure. In developing countries like India, the cost of projects is one of the major impediments in the implementation of e-Governance initiatives.

Privacy and Security: Recent spark in data leak cases has threatened the peoples' faith in e-governance. Therefore, the implementation of e-governance projects must have security standards and protocols for safeguarding the interest of all classes of masses.

Digital Divide: Huge gap between users and non-users of e-govt. services. The digital divide takes form in rich-poor, male-female, urban-rural etc segments of the population. The gap needs to be narrowed down, then only the benefits of e-governance would be utilized equally.

Suggestions:
- A hybrid approach needs to be adopted for enhancing interoperability among e-governance applications which will encompass a centralized approach for document management, knowledge management, file management, grievance management etc.
- The e-governance initiatives in rural areas should be taken by identifying and analyzing the grassroots realities.
- The government should also focus on devising appropriate, feasible, distinct and effective capacity building mechanisms for various stakeholders viz bureaucrats, rural masses, urban masses, elected representatives, etc.
- Cloud computing is also becoming a big force to enhance the delivery of services related to e-governance. Cloud computing is not only a tool for cost reduction but also helps in enabling new services, improving the education system and creating new jobs/ opportunities.
- Meghraj- GI Cloud is a step in the right direction. The focus of this initiative is to accelerate the delivery of e-services in the country while optimizing ICT spending of the Government.
- e-Governance through regional languages is appreciable for the nations like India where people from several linguistic backgrounds are the participants.

Conclusion: India is a developing nation. Its population is the second largest in the world after the China. Both Central and State Government has to render various public services to do governance in various sectors relating to the citizens. So both governments have a pressure of doing governance effectively and efficiently. E-Governance is a most effective form of delivering public services to the citizens in online mode. It helps the government to do their task related to citizens. There is need of continuous study on e-Governance in India. In spite of poor infrastructure, poverty, illiteracy, language dominance and all other reasons India has number of award winning e- Governance projects . The effective promotion schemes by the Central Government of India are a boosting factor to provide quality services to their citizens. According to Scotch Consultancy, New Delhi, 81% citizens report reduction in corruption, 95% find cost of e- Governance affordable and 78% favour fast of delivery of services. Therefore, we can say that e- Governance is the key to the Good- Governance for developing countries like India to minimize corruption, provide efficient and effective or quality services to their citizens. e-Governance is getting momentum in India, but public awareness and the digital divide are important issues to be addressed. The success of e-Governance measures largely depends on the availability of high-speed internet, and the nation-wide roll-out of 5G technology in the near future will strengthen our resolve.

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