

Role of E-Governance in improving the Society

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Abstract

The paper aims to bring out the impact of the various changes initiated by the Government of India as a part of e-Governance. E-governance, which was initiated some years ago, has gained momentum owing to the Digital India Programme launched this year by launched by Mr. Narendra Modi. Both the Central and the State authorities are trying to bring transparency and ease by transacting electronically. The Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DEIT) has joined hands with the government and is helping the citizens to be at ease and even participate in the functioning of the government. Through this paper, an attempt has been made to have an in-depth understanding of the concept of e-governance and the role of various schemes launched at the central and state levels. People are required to be made aware of the new way of doing the transactions for which they need to be digitally literate. E-governance and Digital India go hand in hand, infact pave way for each other. Just like Digital India Initiative is setting an

example for the world at large, e-governance when implemented and utilised properly can bring great changes and take our economy to higher levels.

Keywords: e-governance, ICT, electronic media, NeGP

I. INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of India has bestowed a very powerful identity to it by lending the word 'democracy'. The government here, works for the welfare of its people with the participation of its citizens and the manner in which it functions, is what we call as governance. Governance is all pervasive. It starts with controlling a household by the head of the house, or a company or an organisation by its board of directors and ends at governing or controlling the country at large. The Governance scenario in India changed to e-governance since computers were first introduced. The e-governance initiative taken by the government in the year 2006 did not yield much benefit, but thanks to India's first Cyber Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi who increased the

efficacy of e-governance by providing the relevant infrastructure and policies in this regard. Owing to technological changes and the introduction of the “Digital India Programme” the concept of e-governance has made its place in the country. E-Governance is also one of the important topics of discussion nowadays. It is monitoring the transactions and working of organisations or individuals with the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in order to promote effectiveness, efficiency and transparency.

II. EVOLUTION

It was in early 1990s that the concept of good governance came to the limelight with the publication of two reports by the World Bank. In the first report entitled “Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth (1989), the bank emphasised on need for good governance. While in the second report entitled “Governance And Development”(1992),the bank identified the various aspects of good governance. The emphasis on good governance has now shifted to SMART governance implying: simple, moral, accountable, responsive and transparent governance. E-governance is one such initiative in the move towards smart governance. The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) prepared by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology

(DEIT) and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) in the year 2006, laid down the foundation for building a technology-enabled knowledge economy. Under this plan, all the government services are made available to the citizens of India via electronic media.

The “e” in e-Governance stands for 'electronic'. It implies the application of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) to the functioning of the government. E-governance aims at bringing efficiency and effectiveness in the functioning of the government.

III. SCOPE OF E-GOVERNANCE

E-governance aims at improving interactions among the government, citizens and businesses. It covers the following relationships:

(a) Government to Citizen

The government has undertaken various measures to help its citizens in every possible way considering their health, education, transportation, taxation, certification, registration etc. For the sake of convenience for its citizens, government has made everything electronic and introduced various portals. SEHAT is one such initiative taken by the ministry to provide health facilities without delay at a nominal cost.

(b) Citizen to Government

In order to have peoples' say in the functioning of the government and to encourage more and more participation of the masses, online feedback and online debates as to the government services are organised. Such initiatives only render a true meaning to democracy.

(c) Government to Government

Measures such as e-administration, e-police and e-courts have been introduced in order to reduce the paper work and bring morality and transparency in the working of various government departments. With the aid of technology, not only cyber crimes but crimes of other nature can also be handled very easily by issuing online summons and hearing.

(d) Government to Business

The government has eased the way of doing business with the help of e-tendering, e-licensing and e-taxation. Good governance not only at the country level but also at corporate level can only help to reduce the level of corruption and bring transparency on a whole.

IV. E-GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES IN INDIA

The various measures introduced to promote e-governance are as follows:

1. National e-Governance Plan (NeGP)

It was approved in the year 2006, consisting of 27 Mission Mode Projects and 8 support components to be implemented at the central, state and local government levels. With a very befitting theme, "*ek kadam aapki ore, ek kadam aapke liye*" it endeavours to provide services to the yet unreached and marginalised people at a nominal cost. Common service centres (CSCs), State Wide Area Networks (SWANs) and Electronic Service Delivery Gateways act as a common support infrastructure.

2. State launched e-Governance Projects

Various states have launched e-Governance projects like e-seva (Andhra Pradesh), Bhoomi (Karnataka), Gyandoot (Madhya Pradesh), Lokvani (Uttar Pradesh), e-mitra (Rajasthan) and so on. The people of the respective states have been benefitted in many ways by the launch of such schemes.

3. Establishment of National Institute for Smart Government (NISG)

It was in the year 2002, that the Government of India and NASSCOM incorporated a non-profit organisation at Hyderabad called as National Institute for Smart Government with an aim to facilitate e-governance by the application of both public and private resources.

V. E-GOVERNANCE SCHEMES FOR VARIOUS SECTORS

1. Banking Sector

1. Direct Benefit Scheme (DBS) under which consumers will receive subsidies directly linked to their bank accounts.
2. Linking of bank accounts with Aadhar for DBT will allow efficient tracking and monitoring of benefits transfer. It will also reduce leakages and duplication of beneficiaries.
3. The Jan-Dhan-Aadhar-Mobile trinity aims to integrate the three identification numbers to allow citizens to avail several government benefits.
4. Digital lockers, allowing citizens to upload their own electronic documents with or without digitally signing them using the e-sign facility allowing them to store all such documents.
5. MUDRA Bank, launched in order to encourage the small entrepreneurs by providing them loans at reasonable rates.

2. Industrial Sector

1. Two e-Governance initiatives have been launched aimed at providing Single window solution to exporters and other stakeholders through two new websites (Portals), (i) Online MPEDA Registration portal for Exporters, and (ii) MPEDA Portal – www.mpeda.gov.in.
2. Online submission of applications for Environment Clearance by State Environment Impact Assessment.

3. Digital employment exchange that will enable industrial enterprises to find suitable workers and job-seekers to find employment.

3. Social Sector

1. **SEHAT**, a healthcare initiative introduced by the Government of India is an endeavour by which the people can consult doctors online and place an order for generic drugs.
2. **PaHaL**, a scheme for LPG Subsidy linked directly to the bank accounts or adhaar cards.
3. **“Give it up”** campaign accompanying PaHal, to give up the subsidy and a website www.giveitup.in has been launched for the same.
4. **HIMMAT** app launched for the safety of women will aid the authorities in dealing with cases related to women harassments.

4. Agricultural Sector

1. E-Krishi, an agricultural portal launched by the state of Kerala that provides accessibility to price information on agriculture portal.
2. Smart phone mobile apps in regional languages. One such app is developed by the Jaylaxmi Agrotech Pvt. Ltd.
3. Subsidies to the farmers have been linked to their aadhar card which will help in reaching out the right person and bringing transparency

VI. E-GOVERNANCE IN PUNJAB

The prosperous state of Punjab is no behind the other state in terms of keeping itself abreast of the technological changes taking place. The state has made several attempts to do governance electronically. The State Government is committed to provide transparent and effective governance to the citizens of the State. Also, the state is actively participating in the Digital India Programme launched by the current government.

The various e-governance initiatives taken by the state are as follows:

1. **PAWAN** (Punjab State Wide Area Network), a converged fibre network connecting government offices at state, district and local levels. It is designed to cater to the governance information and communication requirements of whole state of Punjab.
2. **SUWIDHA** (Single User Window Disposal Helpline for Applicants), launched in 2005 to provide easy and speedy services to individuals related to various departments. Presently 115 suwidha centres are operational in more than 35 districts or sub divisions.
3. **SAANJH** Kendras, an initiative by the Punjab Police to lodge a complaint and track the status of the complaint filed. 500 *saanjh kendras* are already operational and are providing more than 20 services of the police station to the people.
4. **FARD** Kendras, operational in PPP mode, provide land record services to the citizens on payment of a nominal fee. The data of all the districts have been put on the website for public access.
5. **STATE TRANSPORT** service counters, that provide smart card based driving licenses, permits and learners licences.
6. **GRAM SUWIDHA KENDRA**, 2112 rural common service centres for catering the village related issues.
7. **E-District project** has been implemented in two pilot districts of Kapurthala and SBS Nagar. The Project aims at electronic delivery of identified high volume citizen centric services, at district and sub district level, with a view to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the service delivery.

VII. BENEFITS OF E-GOVERNANCE

E-governance has offered a plethora of benefits not only to the citizens but it has brought a complete ease and transparency in transactions thereby leading to smart governance.

The important role of e-governance is highlighted in the following points:

1. Increased transparency has reduced corruption in the economy. Corruption which is one of the major challenges

ahead of Indian economy can be mitigated by e-governance.

2. Increased efficiency and effectiveness in the way services are delivered. People's convenience is given due consideration.
3. Empowerment of rural communication with the help of making bank accounts mandatory and linking adhaar cards to avail various benefits.
4. Increase in taxation revenue as tax payments and filing of returns when done electronically bring more transparency and lesser chances of tax avoidance.
5. Increased legitimacy of government, by making everything digitalised. The launch of various portals and apps like mygovt app help in bringing a greater transparency and legitimacy.
6. Flattened organisational structure is promoted with the help of e-governance as people stand on common parlance with the government.
7. Reduced paper work and red tapism in the administrative process is possible only with the help of e-governance.
8. Greater citizen participation in the governance process, brings enlightenment among the people.
9. Improvement in relationship between the public authorities and civil society brings a congenial atmosphere in the entire country and makes it a better place to work in.

VIII. CHALLENGES IN E-GOVERNANCE

Governance which is being done electronically (e-governance) is a good measure for bringing convenience and transparency. But there are certain challenges which the government will have to face. The first and the foremost being the lack of means of assessing such facilities. A country where still a major share of the population works just to earn a livelihood can't think beyond that. Now whether the government announces some measures for their benefit, it is hardly going to make any difference. Talking about the literate masses, the story is almost similar. Indian people by nature are risk averters and still rely on doing things manually rather than electronically. The reason for such an attitude is lack of security when things are done via electronic mode. And, as regards increase in the number of people using internet, though the number is increasing substantially, yet again there is a problem with the network provided by various internet service providers. The launching of various websites or portals will not yield great benefits unless a proper upkeep of such sites is done. Cyber Crimes are on the rise nowadays. Therefore, people don't want to furnish their details of bank accounts or other important documents while transacting electronically. The government though has introduced Digital Lockers, with the aim of imparting digital identity to its citizens, but

proper care of such lockers is required. Not only the introduction of initiatives, but their proper implementation and monitoring can help in mitigating the challenges faced.

IX. SCOPE FOR IMPROVEMENT

1. Awareness campaigns to be organised in order to disseminate information regarding the initiatives taken by the government.
2. People should be encouraged to be a part of digital literacy programme which is provided free of cost, only then they will be able to fully understand and utilise the governance schemes.
3. High speed internet access to be provided by the various service providing companies.
4. Upkeep of various sites, portals and websites should be done in order to deliver right services to the right people.
5. A proper monitoring of the e-governance schemes is required to be done so that necessary changes can be done timely.

X. CONCLUSION

The Digital India Programme launched on 1st July 2015, has provided an impetus to e-governance. The existing systems of e-governance have been revamped to the Digital India initiative. E-governance has made the functioning of the respective authorities more convenient and transparent.

Also, various states have digitalised their working thus gaining the trust and confidence of its people. But, a lot is yet to be done. The facilities which are aimed to be provided to the marginalized people are far behind in availing them. Also, many of them are not even aware of such programmes. Efforts should be made not only to promote such schemes or initiatives to catch the attention of the countrymen but to actually create a social change... a change for good. And, such changes cannot be developed overnight. Though a lot of time will be needed to make India an enlightened economy, but it will definitely be what it is desired to be with the dual efforts of Digital India and E-governance.

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