Digital Democracy and E-Governance in India

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Abstract

Citizens everywhere are pressuring their governments to adopt more effective and transparent governance practices as new global norms for governance emerge and they grow more conscious of the consequences of corruption. New international governance norms are developing nowadays. Developing nation residents are putting more pressure on their governments to perform better and are becoming more conscious of the consequences of incompetence and corruption. Bribery is no longer seen as a reasonable expense of conducting business abroad, and attitudes are shifting in industrialized nations as well. Various e-Governance projects in Asia, with a special focus on India, were carried out by the ICT sector's development. The study concludes that E-Governance expedites routine administrative tasks by automating them. Along with meeting citizens' needs like never before, it also makes government operations more efficient, increases revenue growth, and reduces costs. The true meaning of digital democracy is that citizens can freely communicate with different government agencies at any time, location, and with the least amount of work and speed possible. We will talk about in this essay. India: Electronic governance and digital democracy.

Keywords: Digital Democracy, E-Governance, Growth, Costs Less, Technologies, National Informatics Centers, Information Technology, Citizen, Government, Business, Operations, Policy, Decisions

Introduction:

International communication policy debates highlight that, rather than being a secondary outcome of tackling "core" development concerns, using digital opportunities in the twenty-first century is a necessary step in addressing such challenges. This is why the Indian government became interested in the role and significance of information and communication technologies (ICTs), and they started deploying ICTs in the 1970s. The Indian government made the decision to accelerate the usage of ICT in the 1990s in 1985, under Rajiv Gandhi's guidance. Government secretariats in the state capitals were connected to district and rural government offices through the National Informatics Centers Network (NICNET), which was then connected to the national network in New Delhi. Legal recognition for digital signatures in transactions conducted through electronic data interchange and other electronic communication channels, or electronic commerce, was granted by the Information Technology (IT) Act of 2000, which was put into effect. [1]

Concept of E-Governance

Information technology is the recent birthplace of the idea of e-governance. Application of IT for good governance has undergone a paradigm shift as a result of the developing notion. "Governance" is a term that is frequently used. Even though a number of international organizations have attempted to define governance and its scope, the term is not always the best. The system that directs and controls the activities, affairs, policies, and functions of a political entity, organization, or country is generally referred to as governance.

Governments are attempting to increase the efficiency or effectiveness of the executive function, which includes public service delivery, by the use of information technology, a practice known as electronic governance, or e-governance. "The application of electronic means in government-business and citizen (G2C), as well as internal government operations (G2G) to simplify and improve democratic government, and business aspects of governance," is one definition for it. Therefore, e-governance governance encompasses far more than just online service delivery and electronic town halls or online voting. It all comes down to the constant interactions between the public, private sector, and government. [2]

Five pillars provide the foundation for the e-governance system: (1) computer, (2) connectivity, (3) content, (4) consumer, and (5) confidence building. In this context, "computer" refers to all government hardware and software requirements. "Connectivity" describes the system, bandwidth, and other information that is carried. Information sent amongst the system's "consumers" is referred to as "content." The term "Consumer" encompasses any human and human-implanted systems that utilize and access the "Content" within the e-governance framework. "Confidence building" describes these kinds of initiatives that support citizens' adoption of e-transformation and assist them grow in confidence in e-governance.

Government and E-Governance

ICT use in governance systems is the focus of e-governance, a decision-making process. It guarantees the increased and more profound involvement of institutions, businesses, NGOs, and citizens in the governing system. In this democratic era, e- governance is a method of participatory approach. E-Government can be defined as the implementation of e-governance, or the modernization of government procedures and operations utilizing ICT tools to change how it serves its constituents. In the present era of e-government, citizens are viewed as passive recipients of digital services and information with no active participation. [3]

Goals of e-Governance:

Comparing private sector firms to government organizations reveals that the former may save 40–50% on operating costs, while the latter finds it difficult to shift from traditional to online transaction models. Government exists to ensure political accountability and parliamentary restrictions, not to make money. Making governance more accessible, affordable, and transparent is the goal of e- Government. Increased public participation is one of the objectives of e- Government. With the use of the internet, people may communicate with public officials and politicians nationwide and have their opinions heard. Blogs and interactive surveys could be used to gather citizen opinions. Chat rooms give people the opportunity to communicate with elected officials in real time and through their offices, giving voters direct control over their government. Technologies have the potential to improve voter decision-making and establish a transparent democracy. Open government allows the public to see how choices are made and holds elected officials responsible for their deeds. Citizens start to have a direct and noticeable influence on legislative decisions to some extent. [4]

Digital Democracy

Digital democracy is "a collection of attempts to practice democracy without the limits of time, space, and other physical conditions, using ICT or computer-mediated communication (CMC) instead, as an addition, not a replacement for traditional ("analogue") political practices." That is to say, it is different from "street democracy" and occurs in randomly chosen physical environments rather than the actual locations of power centers. While "teledemocracy" refers to a limited range of electronic voting and polling systems, the phrase "virtual democracy" suggests a new kind of democracy. Because it can refer to broadcast media, the phrase

"electronic democracy" is overly general and does not adequately address the implications of digital technologies such as podcasts, hacktivism, and authentication. It can also refer to traditional media like television and the phone.

Our current project, "Digital Democracy in India," looks at how "governance by networks" and "rule by data" are becoming more prevalent in the nation and how this impacts inclusive citizenship. In order to protect and advance the interests of marginalized citizens during the shift to digitally mediated service delivery and public decision making, our main focus is on outlining crucial paths for institutional reform.

In a democracy, the people hold the ultimate power and choose their representatives through free and fair elections. This idea is expanded into the field of technology by digital democracy, sometimes referred to as internet or E-democracy. Digital democracy includes much more than just electronic voting; it also includes citizen participation in governmental processes and the defense and advancement of democratic values. Citizens can actively interact with their elected officials and participate in decision-making and other political processes by utilizing internet platforms and technologies. People may voice their thoughts, offer suggestions, and hold their leaders responsible with this digital approach. Within the framework of democracy, the Indian Constitution was crafted to take into account the nation's rapidly changing social and political landscape. Furthermore, "digital democracy" can also refer to the use of contemporary technology to enhance and alter old democratic procedures and institutions like the political class and the legislature. In the end, digital democracy is a tool for bringing citizens into the political process on a proactive level, which increases political culture knowledge and efficacy. [5]

The Indian Initiatives towards Digital Democracy

The national government's information age initiatives, such as the IT Act and Policy, are being swiftly emulated by the state governments in India. A recent NASSCOM- McKinsey report states that the Indian e-government infrastructure and services market is worth 1.5 billion dollars to software developers, IT suppliers, and training providers.

Studies on India's IT situation have shown that the country's government sets aside at least 2-3% of its budget for IT-related expenses. The ASEAN group of nations has announced a "e-ASEAN" effort in Southeast Asia, with an emphasis on e- government and e-commerce, in other regions of Asia. Four clusters of IT projects have been assigned to ten global corporations, including GM, Oracle, and Sun. The philosophies of the past do not firmly bind the ASEAN nations together. India continues to trail significantly behind other nations in global indices of human development and information society metrics, even with all of its advancements in the IT sector. Political parties usually agree that there is some potential for the IT sector to help solve some of society's issues. But there has to be a significant amount of knowledge and lesson-sharing throughout the many Indian states. Other areas need to catch up quickly, even though the "IT triangle" of Bangalore, Chennai, and Hyderabad is making good strides in e-government. [6]

e-Democracy

In just a decade, e-Democracy has evolved from futuristic speculation to fragmented experimentation. The need for direct, unmediated democracy was already apparent at that point, as was its promise. With information technology, deliberate democratic inefficiencies can be rendered more effective. Among e-Democracy's objectives are:

- Improved Government decisions
- Increased citizen trust in Government

- Increased government accountability and transparency

- Ability to accommodate the public will in the information age

- To effectively involve stakeholders, including NGOs, business and interested citizen in new ways of meeting public challenges.

Review of Literature:

The dissemination of public information and services by the government via electronic channels is known as electronic governance, or e-governance. These methods of information delivery are commonly referred to as information technology, or simply "IT." The public and other agencies can receive information more quickly, easily, and transparently when IT is used in government to carry out administrative tasks and disseminate information. "As a set of technology-mediated processes that are changing both the delivery of public services and the broader interactions between citizens and government," is how Kate Oakley defines e- governance. Similar to education, technology helps individuals escape poverty. Technology is therefore a tool for growth and development rather than merely a result of it. (Bhatnagar, 2000) [7]

People are the main stakeholders in e-governance, which has become crucial in the rapidly changing reality. In India, there are three types of egovernance. (1) Government-initiated and -funded initiatives, such as State Electronic Corporations, NIC, CMC, and C-DAC. A move now in the direction of private IT firms. (2) Tarahocit, Franchisee/Kiosk Model, is a non-profit and for-profit sector project. (3) Collaborative projects between public and private entities: E-Seva, where profits are derived from the selling of public information or services, such as licenses and land records (Anandakrishnan, 2003). A number of Indian states are putting e-governance initiatives into place to replace conventional working methods. The southern states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu are leading the way in implementing projects at various citizen-government interaction points, according to a Nasscom analysis of e-governance implementation carried out in ten important states. States like West Bengal, Rajasthan, Kerala, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh are rapidly catching up. Karnataka has already launched a number of e-governance initiatives in this process, including those related to the Common Entrance Test (CET), the Education Department, Nandini, Khajane, etc. Similar e-governance initiatives are being implemented, albeit more slowly, in other states like Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, and Odisha. [8]

The way that citizens transact has changed as a result of the digitization of services. One may argue that digital change in governance is the new standard for governments. Government governance is shifting from traditional to digital due to new technological advancements and citizens' growing expectations for better public service delivery. Today's world depends heavily on the employment of digital technology in national administration, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 epidemic. The government is now more inclined to use information and communication technology tools to deliver public services because to the development of the internet and other digital breakthroughs. Traditional governance is more reliant on paperwork, which ultimately causes a delay in the effectiveness of government administration. However, the application of digital technology in governance enhances public service delivery speed and government efficiency. The main goal of e-governance is conducting business securely and electronically. There are various methods by which the e-governance services can be rendered. However, one such cutting-edge and incredibly affordable technology is cloud computing (Vijaykumar, 2011). [9]

The evolution of the democratic pattern brought about by ICT advancement has yielded several convenient benefits and caused significant change. The community can easily access democracy in the digital age, particularly when it comes to acquiring and expressing information (Hardiman, 2018). Digital democracy

does, however, come with drawbacks in addition to advantages. It is not uncommon for digital platforms to be abused in the name of community democracy. All internet users need to remember that the most important aspect of democracy in the digital age is using good manners and ethics when expressing their opinions. [10]

Objectives:

- To provide an overview of e-governance.
- To examine the rationale and scope of e-governance
- Interaction in e-Governance
- The dimensions of e-democracy

Research Methodology:

In order to offer its citizens with "Digital Democracy," the Indian government has implemented a number of programs. This study examines these programs and their effects on the spread of corruption. In these epidemic times, governments everywhere are attempting to enhance their online digital transformation by increasing their efficiency and transparency. People have migrated to digital forms of labor and governance almost effortlessly as the globe has gone online. The "Eternal Summer" of sound government, which will propel the nation to unprecedented heights of accomplishment and prosperity, is how "Digital Democracy" in India is envisioned in this scenario. Based on secondary data gathered from multiple sources, the current paper is organized into five sections. According to the aforementioned goals, the current article delineates multiple sections.

Result and Discussion:

Interaction in e-Governance:

The three abbreviations in the figure, G2C, G2B and G2G.

	e-Democracy	e-Government	
External			
G2C: Government to Citizen	X	X	
G2B: Government to Business		X	
Internal			
G2G: Government to Government		X	

G2G i.e. Government to Government G2C i.e. Government to Citizen

G2B i.e. Government to Business G2E i.e. Government to Employees

G2G (Government to Government): Information and communications technology is utilized in this exchange to improve the flow of information and services both within and between government institutions, as well as to restructure the governmental procedures involved in their operation. [11]

G2C (Government to Citizens): G2C maintains the relationship between government and citizens. It enables citizens to quickly, easily, from anywhere, and through a variety of channels obtain government information and services. The goal of the government-to-citizens (G2C) paradigm is to make it easier for citizens to communicate with the government. In this case, an interface is created between the people and the government, allowing the citizens to take advantage of effective delivery of a wide range of public services. [12]

G2B (Government to business): e-Government solutions are used to facilitate smooth interactions between commercial entities that offer goods and services and the government. Businesses and governments alike can benefit greatly from G2B efficiencies. G2B refers to the interchange of different services between the public and private sectors, such as documents, policies, rules, and laws. A wide range of business services are provided, such as registering enterprises, getting permits, downloading application forms, lodging taxes, renewing licenses, and accessing up- to-date business information.

G2E (Government to Employees): G2E denotes to the relationship between government and its employees only. Serving employees is the goal of this connection, which also includes providing some online services like, among other things, monitoring the amount of leave, applying online for yearly leave, and reviewing salary payment records. [13]
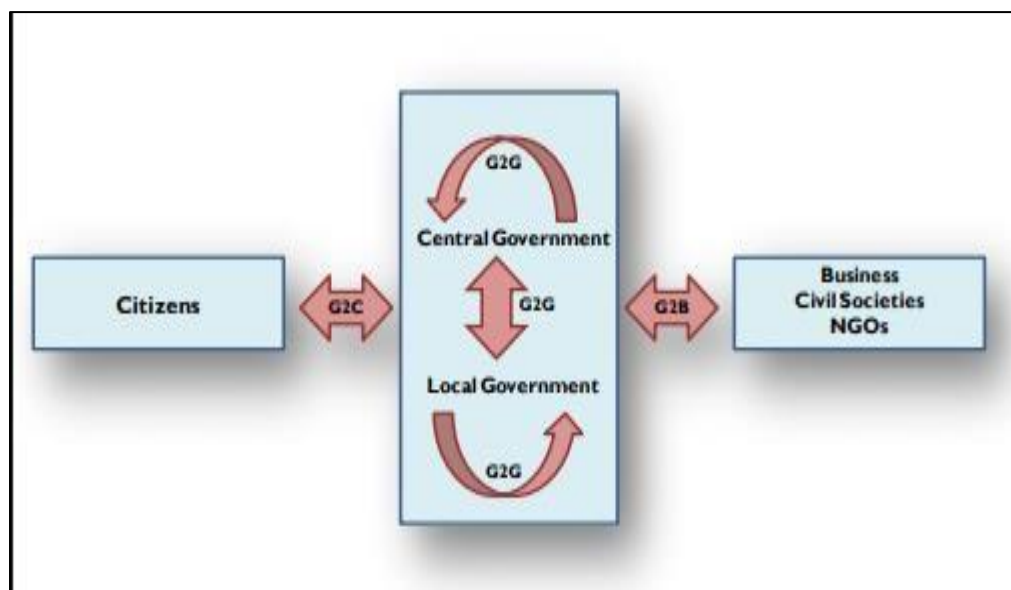

Figure 1: Interactions between main groups in e-governance

(Source: https://www.journalofpoliticalscience.com)

Table 1: Initiatives Taken for e-Governance in India

S. No.	Program	Details
1.	Bhoomi Project (Karnataka): Online Delivery of Land Records	Bhoomi is a self-sustainable e-Governance project for the computerized delivery of 20 million rural land records to 6.7 million farmers of Karnataka.
2.	KHAJANE (Karnataka): End-to-end automation of Government Treasury System	▪ 'Government-to-Government (G2G) e-Governance initiative of the Karnataka State Government. ▪ It has been implemented mainly to eliminate systemic deficiencies in the manual treasury system and for the efficient management of state finances.
3.	e-Seva (Andhra Pradesh)	▪ Designed to provide 'Government to Citizen' and 'e- Business to Citizen' services. ▪ All the services are delivered online to consumers /citizens by connecting them to the respective government departments and providing online information at the point of service delivery. The project has become very popular among the citizens especially for the payment of utility bills.
4.	e-Courts	▪ Launched by the Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice. ▪ The Mission Mode Project (MMP) aims at utilizing technology for improved provisioning of judicial services to citizens.
5.	e-District	▪ Launched by the Department of Information Technology. ▪ The MMP aims at delivery of high volume, citizen-centric services at the District level such as the issue of birth/death certificate, income and caste certificates, old age and widow pension, etc.
6.	MCA21	▪ Launched by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs. ▪ The project aims to provide electronic services to the Companies registered under the Companies Act. Various online facilities offered includes allocation and change of name, incorporation, online payment of registration charges, change in address of registered office, viewing of public records and other related services.
7.	e-Office	▪ Launched by the Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances. ▪ The MMP aims at significantly improving the operational efficiency of the Government by transitioning to a "Less Paper Office".

(Source: https://www.journalofpoliticalscience.com)

E-governance encompasses more than just process simplification and service enhancement. It is crucial in modernizing how citizens engage in democracy and changing governments.

Governments will be able to clearly see the greater overt inspiration to move from manual to IT-enabled operations in order to boost administrative and service delivery efficiency. This modification can be seen as a wise investment with substantial yields. [14]

Table 2: Various state governments are implementing a few of the latest e- governance projects. [15]

State/Union Territory	Initiatives covering departmental automation, user charge collection, delivery of policy/programme information and delivery of entitlements
Andhra Pradesh	e-Seva, CARD, VOICE, MPHS, FAST, e-Cops, AP online—One-stop-shop on the Internet, Saukaryam, Online Transaction processing
Bihar	Sales Tax Administration Management Information
Chattisgarh	Chhattisgarh Infotech Promotion Society, Treasury office, e-linking project
Delhi	Automatic Vehicle Tracking System, Computerisation of website of RCS office, Electronic Clearance System, Management Information System for Education etc
Goa	Dharani Project
Gujarat	Mahiti Shakti, request for Government documents online, Form book online, G R book online, census online, tender notice.
Haryana	Nai Disha
Himachal Pradesh	Lok Mitra
Karnataka	Bhoomi, Khajane, Kaveri
Kerala	e-Srinkhala, RDNet, Fast, Reliable, Instant, Efficient Network for the Disbursement of Services (FRIENDS)
Madhya Pradesh	Gyandoot, Gram Sampark, Smart Card in Transport Department, Computerization MP State Agricultural Marketing Board (Mandi Board) etc
Maharashtra	SETU, Online Complaint Management System—Mumbai
Rajasthan	Jan Mitra, RajSWIFT, Lokmitra, RajNIDHI

(Source: www.civilserviceindia.com)

The dimensions of e-democracy

This concept of e-democracy is three-dimensional, building upon the UN's two- dimensional framework. The first component, which deals with the fundamental requirements for ICT use in democracies, is based on two essential elements that are necessary for e-democracy to exist and endure: (1) the technological infrastructure (access to digital media); and (2) Internet freedom. The latter are legal clauses pertaining to content restriction or unrestricted Internet use. Free access to the Internet based on technological infrastructure and the issue of whether there is any filtering or blocking by independent offices or regulatory agencies are equally vital as legally protected Internet freedom. In contrast to include these criteria in aggregated scores, creating a specific dimension for Internet freedom and equitable access gives a clearer view of the legal and technical status in countries. [16]
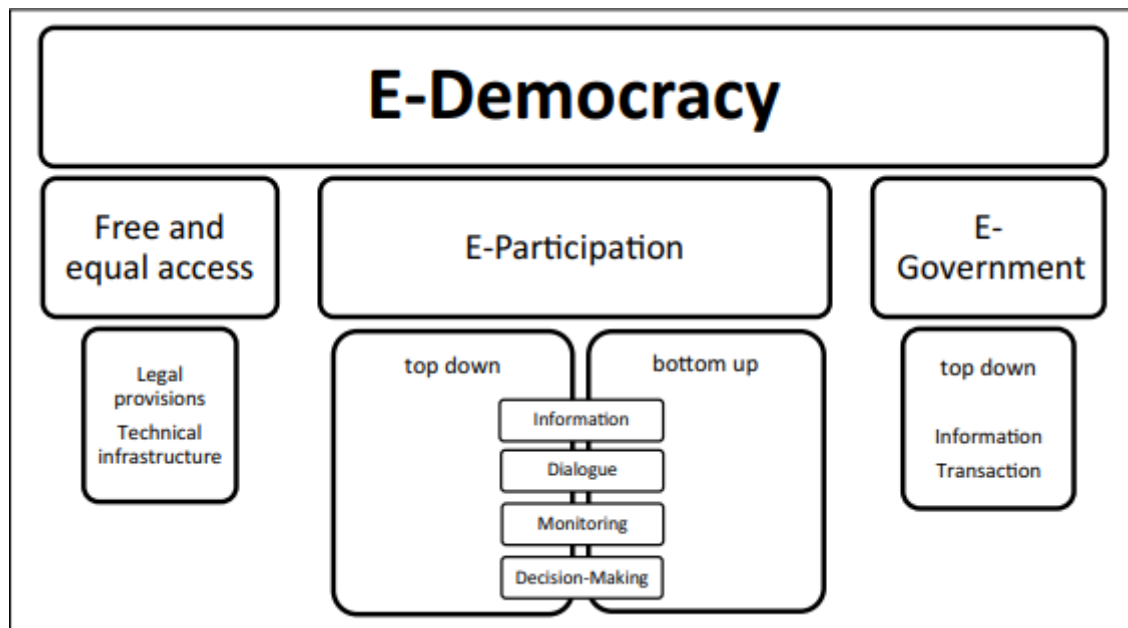

Figure 3: Concept of e-democracy

(Source: UN (2003) 'Global e-Government Survey 2003' [online])

As a result, four levels of e-participation are identified: e-information, e- consultation, e-monitoring, and e-decision-making, as well as two distinct e- participation directions: top-down and bottom-up. Different levels of time, effort, and dedication are reflected in these levels. The public has the option to use digital media only for information purposes, to monitor politicians on particular platforms, to contact politicians via email or social media (such as Facebook or Twitter) and have a conversation with them, or to go one step further and engage in more demanding processes such as signing up for campaigns, participating in e-petitions, and participating in collaborative governance. The same goes for top-down tools as it does for government-provided online-enhanced channels. Based on the UN's model (2014: 195), government online services are categorized into four progressively more demanding stages: connected, emergent, enhanced, and transactional. [17]

Conclusion:

E-governance efforts have been implemented in India, and one of their key effects has been to increase administrative efficiency, transparency, and citizen empowerment. A practical attitude based on a shared goal and structure has been chosen by the government to expedite the nationwide deployment of e-governance at the local, state, and federal levels. Revolutionizing the processes and structures of governance,

e-governance brings with it unprecedented innovations. The government, the people, and many other stakeholders can all reap numerous benefits from it. The successful implementation of e-government in India has the potential to address several concerns, including poverty, bureaucratic corruption, and weak governance. In the historical development of the democratic experiment, e- Democracy attempts to demonstrate how interactive technology might contribute to the process of government. e-Democracy may serve as an addition to the present frameworks.

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