Enabling Good Governance through e-Governance in India: Moments for Retrospection

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Abstract

India is moving towards achieving e-governance. The spread of e-governance initiatives have had a positive impact on the quality of governance. Geographical, social, & economic disparities are the biggest barriers for full-fledged e-governance. Illiteracy, lack of infrastructure, security and privacy of personal and financial data are other constraints. Being the largest democracy, second in terms of population and diversified geography itself creates the big challenges. The aim of this paper is to discuss the position of India in e-governance environment, the issues, challenges and obstacles ahead.It makes an effort to provide a framework for e-governance in India by identifying its essential features and analyzing the shortcomings in its working and emphasizes need for innovative approaches. The goal of the paper is to evaluate the programme against a theoretical background, and also to draw practical lessons from the programme that could provide guidance to new e-governance programmes in the development context.

Keywords: e-Governance, corruption, India, administration, women.

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An efficient, effective and democratic government is the best guarantor of social justice as it forms an orderly society.India is moving towards achieving e-governance. The spread of e-governance initiatives have had a positive impact on the quality of governance.E-Governance is an important tool to enhance the quality of government services to citizens, to bring in more transparency, to reduce corruption, to reduce costs for citizens and to make government more

accessible. The principal response of the state, is to facilitate, to enable and to coordinate. Efficiency and effectiveness, rule of law, people's participation, democracy, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights are the main indicators of good governance. Neither the market nor the civil society can perform this role as effectively as the government. The strong political will power and the social acceptability of e-governance is required in urban as well as rural areas.However, geographical, social, & economic disparities are the biggest barriers for full-fledged e-governance. Governments need to continue their efforts to develop 'Information and Communication Technology' (ICT) infrastructure especially concentrating their efforts in the rural areas.

Doing research in this area will be an attempt to contribute to the important issue lacking coverage as India is not excluded from the global debate of e-governance and good governance. The aim of this paper is to discuss the position of India in e-governance environment, the issues and challenges ahead. It makes an effort to provide a framework for e-governance against a theoretical background by identifying its essential features and the shortcomings in its working and emphasizes need for innovative approaches that could provide guidance to new e-governance programmes in the development context. If e-government is the input, good governance is the output and the major variables are: democratic political system, good economy, effective legal system, open culture, technical infra-structure. The major question addressed in the paper is: Does the introduction of ICT produce good governance in India? Is there a direct causal relationship between the adoption of information and communication technology by government agencies and the practice of good governance? The paper also highlights flaws in the present government system in India and in order to address the systemic inefficiencies suggests key legislative and institutional reforms. The results of this study would help to better understand the concept of 'e-governance and good governance', to facilitate its adoption and to priorities its practices. Through this study, there is an attempt to explore the lessons, which should be learnt to face the challenges. It offers beneficial source of information for policymakers, activists, academicians and researchers. Despite the fact that e-government has made significant contribution in the economies of developed countries in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as well as to the efficiency of the public management systems, the same cannot be said about developing countries especially India. The relationship is both

complex and controversial. The present study substantiates these theoretical assumptions about e-governance by analyzing some experiences at the local, state and federal levels of government in India. The paper reveals the performance of e-governance in India in the context of its role in rural development and promoting social welfare. The paper employs a qualitative methodology based on analysis of published articles and research papers and a number of case studies.

A lot of studies have been conducted in developed as well as developing countries to assess the parameters leading to good governance. Case studies are used to show that e-governance is a current reality for developing countries. However, most e-governance initiatives fail. Overall, e-governance is the information and communication technology-enabled route to achieve good governance. Leading governments are emphasizing the need for their e-government programs to deliver an earlier return on their investment through greater service effectiveness. Every region of the world has improved its e-government performance on nearly every indicator. However, there are continuing problems in the areas of privacy and security that need to be addressed. Government's ability to improve service delivery to other governments, employees, citizens and businesses is directly attached to government's ability to effectively collaborate across organization, processes and IT systems.

The term good governance needs to be understood before moving on to e-government and e-governance. Governance covers every institution and organization from family to the state. It involves exercise of political, economic and administrative authority to manage the affairs in, and "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development".

Conceptual Framework: Good Governance

According to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (1999)," In practice, Good governance is ensuring respect for human rights and the rule of law; strengthening democracy; promoting transparency and capacity in public administration".

Good Governance is a concept that has recently come into use in political science and public administration. It appears alongside concepts such as democracy, civil society, people's participation, human rights and social and sustainable development. In the last decade, it has been closely associated with public sector reform. For instance, for John Rawls: Social justice is fairness; for Amartya Sen: Development of freedom; In Atlantic Charter: World free from fear and want; In UNDP: Human development, According to John Paul II: Freedom of a person to live out his/her creative potential; In Commonwealth: Commitment to the democratic process and institutions, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, just and honest government, and fundamental human rights. Good governance's essentials were prevalent in India since ancient times. In Arthshastra, Kautilya had described the qualities of a King as: "The happiness of the people is the happiness of the king; their good alone is his. Therefore let the King be active in working for the prosperity and welfare of his people".

Good governance is difficult to define either in principle or in practice. In terms of the prevailing thinking, economic reforms, good governance and democracy form three interrelated and mutually supportive aspects of the development process (Joseph2001: 1011). Prof. Barthwal (2005) opines that governance is not the exclusive concern of the government as such but shared responsibility of government, market, civil societies and corporations together with the objective of public good for "re-inventing government" functioning in a "mode missionary, egalitarian and energized manner, having less machine-like and less hierarchal structure and procedure. In a democracy, good governance is exercise of power for efficient and effective management of economic and social resources for the well-being of the people. This power has to be exercised within the framework of the Constitution through the institutions of state. With the passage of time and changes in the eco-system, some institutions become dysfunctional and new institutions become necessary. Good governance is a mechanism to establish order, pursue social and economic progress and promote welfare of the people. The Preamble, the Fundamental Rights, the Fundamental Duties and the Directive Principles of State Policy contain the ingredients of good governance.

Good governance is a reflection of successful functioning of healthy democratic society. It entails free and open participation in the political processes by the people. In India, good governance as exercise of power, within the framework of the Constitution is exercised through the institutions of state. In the Indian Constitution, there are three pillars of democracy-Parliament, Executive and Judiciary. Wider involvement of the civil society in the political process, deeper engagement of the youth with the institutions of democracy and quick dispensation of justice to the people lead to good governance. Election is a symbol of democracy and reflects peace and prosperity. The deep roots of Indian democracy can be witnessed from the fact that from a level of about 58 per cent in both the 2004 and 2009 General Elections, the voter turnout has gone up to an encouraging 66 per cent in 2014 elections. Fundamental rights are essential to preserve human dignity. Human dignity cannot be assured without the elimination of poverty. The Directive Principles are an essential guide to good governance practices. Only good governance can eradicate backwardness. The provision of freedom of speech and expression has given rise to a powerful and vigilant media. It depends upon ethical and responsible behaviour of media.

An important aspect of the rise of civil society is the proliferation of voluntary or nongovernmental organizations. Technology and the use of digital media have changed the way youth participate in activism globally, and youth are more active in media than older generations. Good governance demands quick dispensation of justice to the people. Judiciary has been vigilant to protect the individual rights. Good governance demands ethical and responsible behavior of media. The Right to Information Act (RTI) is an Act of the Parliament of India "to provide for setting out the practical regime of right to information for citizens". Citizens should be conscious of duties and responsibility besides rights. It calls for ever-increasing engagement of the youth in the institutions and processes of democracy. Good governance is critically dependent on inviolable adherence to rule of law, existence of participatory decision-making structure, responsiveness, transparency, accountability, corruption-free society, equity and inclusiveness. In short, Good governance calls for adequate decentralization of power. The 73rd Amendment in the Constitution of India had been hailed as a great landmark in the evolution of Third tier of governance (PRIs).Panchayati Raj institutions need financial autonomy and administrative ability. Reforms in this third tier of governance are necessary for sharing of real power with the people. A sound education system is the mirror of an enlightened society. The

institutes of higher learning are the cradle of future administrators and policy makers. The government and the people must ensure that these institutions perform their duties with responsibility. In the context of Indian democracy, good governance is a reflection of the successful functioning of the institutions of state with the singular intention of the well-being of citizens.

E-Government and E-Governance: A Facilitator for Good Governance

In the past, service delivery mechanisms of the government departments was characterized by inefficiency in work, attitude of officials, procedural complexities, corruption etc.Public administration, governed by bureaucratic structures built on rationale principles, has failed to respond to the changing requirements of the present times. With the rising awareness amongst the citizens and their better experiences with the private sector, the demand for better services on the part of government departments became more pronounced. The concept of empowering the citizen via electronic governance has been gaining momentum. The infusion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has played a prominent role in strengthening this demand. A new model based on market principles has several names such as: 'managerialism', 'new public management', 'market based public administration', 'the post bureaucratic paradigm', or 'entrepreneurial government' (Hughes 1998). To make the new system more effective and ensure efficiency, the use of information technology in the governance process is emphasized. India has introduced these global trends in 1990.

E-governance i.e., rendering of government services and information to the public using electronic means, is a paradigm shift over the traditional approaches in public administration. This new paradigm has brought about a revolution in the quality of service delivered to the citizens. It has ushered in transparency in the governing process, saves time, simplifies the procedures, better office and record management, reduces corruption, improves job handling capacity of the personnel. E-Governance is the public sector's use of information and communication technologies with the aim of improving information and service delivery, encouraging citizen participation in India. The concept 'e-governance' began with National Informatics Center's efforts to connect all district headquarters through computers in 1980s. In 2002 it further proposed the setting up an Indian portal for public access to information on various aspects of government functioning. E-governance promotes the efficiency and enforces

accountability in the working of the government system. The two terms- e-government and e-governance are independent of each other. E-government is understood as the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to promote more efficient and cost effective government, facilitate government services and allow greater public access to information, and make government more accountable to citizens, whereas governance is a wider term which covers the state's institutional arrangements, decision making processes, implementation capacity and the relationship between government officials and the public. E-governance is the use of ICT by the government, civil society and political institutions to engage citizens through dialogue and feedback to promote their greater participation in the process of governance of these institutions. Thus, e-government can be viewed as a subset of e-governance, and its focus is largely on improving administrative efficiency and reducing administrative corruption (Bhatnagar 2004).

The introduction of Information Technology in the governance process has brought about a revolution in the quality of service delivered to its citizens. While e-government encompasses a wide range of activities, four distinct areas include government-to-government (G to G), government-to-citizens (G to C), government-to-business (G to B), and government-to-employees (G to E) (Govt. of India Report 2008: 11-12).However, some common goals include improving the efficiency, reliability, and quality of services for the respective groups. Government to government involves sharing data and conducting electronic exchanges between various governmental agencies. There are number of advantages with government-to-government initiatives. One benefit is cost savings, which is achieved by increasing the speed of the transactions, reduction in the number of personnel necessary to complete a task, and improving the consistency of outcomes. Another advantage is improvement in the management of public resources. Government to citizen facilitates citizen interaction with government, which is primary goal of e-government. This attempts to make transactions, such as payment of taxes, renewing licenses and applying for certain benefits, less time consuming and easy to carry out. Government to Business sector includes both the procurement of goods and services by the government as well as the sale of surplus government goods to the public on line. Government-to-employees is a two way process between the organization and the employee. Use of ICT make the interaction fast and efficient and increase the satisfaction level of employee.

The question arises, what comes first, E-Governance or Good Governance? Over 200 policymakers, planners, technocrats, and representatives from UN organizations, academia and private sector came together on 24th October in Delhi in the first e-governance forum organized by India's, The Economic Times to reflect upon the achievements, challenges and opportunities ahead for e-governance in India (Nath 2013). The government came up with its national e-governance plans in 2006. To achieve this vision, it allocated increasing amount of financial resources to e-governance. In the 11th five-year plan, the allocation on information technology was 11,000 crore rupees and rose to 30,000 crore rupees in the 12th five year plan. More planning and resources need to be invested if the e-governance vision has to be realized practically and nationally.

E-Government Initiatives in India: An Overview

Has India been largely successful in implementing good governance through the constitutional framework? There are much legislation to meet growing needs of expanding society. Objective of administration today is welfare of the people. Substantially, India has been able to provide good governance. The Government of India started the use of IT by launching number of initiatives. The Government approved the 'National E-Governance Action plan' for implementation during the year 2003-2007. The plan is an attempt to lay the foundation and provide impetus for long-term growth of e-governance within the country. Apart from the action plan, the following measures have also been introduced:

• Adoption of "Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 by the Government of India to provide legal framework to facilitate electronic transactions to recognize electronic contracts and prevents computer crimes. The Act came into force on 17 October, 2000.

• Establishment of the National Taskforce of Information Technology and Software Development in May 1998.

• Creation of Centre for e-governance to disseminate the best practices in the area of e-governance for the use by the Central and State Governments.

• Developing e-office solutions to enable various ministries and departments to do their work electronically.

• Setting up of a High Powered Committee with Cabinet Secretary as its Chairman to improve administrative efficiency by using Information Technology in Government.

• Instituting websites by almost all Ministries and Departments.

The government in India has been continuously endeavoring to provide citizen services in a better manner. There have been several successful initiatives and many noteworthy projects have been undertaken in various states of India. Thus, a good beginning has been made to make e-government a reality in India. Sincere efforts are required to maintain the momentum. A number of state governments have initiated measures to introduce information technology and its tools in the governance process. Various e- government projects across India with a view to explore the natures of implementations of these projects, benefits imparted from them to citizens are noteworthy. Some of the successful initiatives are: Gyandoot, e-seva, SETU and SUDA (Kalsi et. al 2009: 216-217). The project 'Bhoomi' facilitated computerizations of entire 20 million records of land ownership of 6.7 million farmers in the state of Karnataka. (Monga2008: 57). The project came to be a success, as it resulted in simplification of procedures, reduced the hardships of the poor farmers, put an end to corruption and ensured a more accountable, transparent, and responsive system. Project "Gyandoot" was launched on 1 January 2000 in tribal-dominated rural areas of Madhya Pradesh. Lack of information about the rates of agricultural produce, difficulty in accessing information on land records and absence of grievance redressal mechanism were the main problems. The awards such as the Stockholm Challenge IT Award 2000 in the Public Service and Democracy category and the CSI-TCS National Award for Best IT usage for the year 2000, are signs of its success. The Government of Andhra Pradesh, in its endeavor to provide simple, moral, accountable, responsive and transparent governance to its people, launched 'Smart Government' at the secretariat level. This project resulted in an automatic workflow in the secretariat and ensured not only internal efficiency but also provided an effective tool for performance evaluation. (Monga2008: 59). Project Sustainable Access in Rural India (SARI) in the State of Tamil Nadu, in a tiny village called path in ettangudi, are experiencing IT revolution. They are using e-mails, voice mail and web cams. Around 30 other villages around path in ettangudi are also covered under SARI project. Chandigarh Administration in an effort to provide a responsive and effective administration has effectively relied on the Information Technology. Its Memorandum of

Understanding with IBM has led to establishment of 'IBM e-governance solution centre' for the administration, consequently developing different e-government applications. A Project called 'Sampark' has been initiated. Under this project electronic service centers known as 'Sampark Centers' have been established at different locations in the city. In Gujarat, a team of techno-savvy bureaucrats have finally succeeded in bringing corruption under check and consequently increasing state's tax revenues through the effective usage of computers and other electronic devices at some 10 remote interstate border check posts.

Thus, it can be concluded that with the introduction of e-government applications, the service delivery mechanisms in India have made clear departure from the past including delaying tendencies of officials. E-Governance causes reduction in corruption and increase in tax revenues.

E-Governance for Development of India

The concept of e-governance is now moving towards reality for Indian citizens. The country is moving from pilot e-governance projects to bigger Mission projects. The core strategy for India is to move ahead in a systematic manner. The financial sector is revolutionized through ICT. The National e-Governance Plan (2003-2007) of Indian Government laid the foundation of e-Governance within the country. The plan seeks to create the right governance and institutional mechanisms, to create a citizen-centric and business-centric environment. In 2005, the World Bank showed its willingness to increase funding for e-governance initiatives in India. In Mission 2007, every village is to be a knowledge centre aiming to provide knowledge connectivity to every village by August 15, 2007. The government has set this target according to national e-governance plan. An apex committee under the Cabinet Secretary is in place for providing the strategic direction and management oversight.

The role of MIS for monitoring a rural self-employment program, the Swarnjayanti Gram SwarozgarYojana(SGSY), in the state of Gujarat. The genesis and evolution of the Akshayatelecenter project in Kerala, was established to improve community development in rural areas. Health information system to improve public health care in rural Karnataka. In all

three case studies, the state is a key player. In Gujarat, the "intelligence" of government workers, and the important role they play in sustaining self-help groups, is not embedded in the formal MIS. There is doubt on the extent to which the MIS can promote development by improving the administration of the SGSY. In Kerala, the telecenter interventions were meant to improve the economic and social lives of rural communities. The telecenters provide a social space for integrating local administrative, political, and social systems, which bring together local expertise on one hand and scientific domain knowledge and the state on the other. In Karnataka, health information systems in a primary health center show the "important role of local health fieldworkers, other key government workers and political representatives in providing a community-based system of healthcare for the rural poor communities" (Madon 2009: 136). The success of any intervention calls for an understanding of the informal environment within which the formal intervention is inserted. This understanding provides not just crucial information about development issues but also helps address the "dynamic, unpredictable and idiosyncratic elements of development planning that are often glossed over in the governance reform agenda" (Madon 2009: 162). "It has always been easier to develop e-governance applications which rely on obtaining and inputting quantitative data for measuring progress but which may or may not have a bearing on improving the living conditions of communities" (Monga2008: 163).

The common service centres are now established in all parts of the country, and there are almost 130,000 of them providing range of services including payment of bills and taxes, getting government certificates, filing applications, and agricultural and health services. The national e-governance vision has seeded a healthy competition between different states to come up with e-governance models that provide more integrated services to the citizens and serve them better. The MeeSevacentres in Andhra Pradesh handle over 1 lakh applications a day from people seeking different services. The vision is to bring together government departments and citizens together. The e-government services are already available in local languages, and can be accessed online by visiting any of the over 3,000 centres in all districts of Andhra Pradesh.

The system has induced fresh thinking, debate, and innovations in how government services are accessed by the citizens. No other government process has brought together private sector, civil society, youths, entrepreneurs, citizens, and researchers to such an extent.E-government is an

easy way for the public to be more involved in political campaigns. It could increase voter awareness, which could lead to an increase in citizen participation and voter's turn out in elections. It is convenient and cost-effective for businesses, and the public benefits by getting easy access to the most current information available without spending time, energy and money.

Critical Issues for India

E-governance is a big challenge and a far big opportunity to bring services to all citizens. The most significant characteristic of any successful e-government application is its quality and accessibility (Signore 2005). In the Indian context, there are numerous challenges to good governance including size of population, decentralization, decision making process etc. Redefining rules and procedures, information transparency, legal issues, infrastructure, skill and awareness, access to right information, inter-departmental collaboration, tendency to resist the change in work culture, are the main concerns for the government.21 lakh 37 thousand villages are participating in decision making process. It is a complex job where technology can help to find the solution in multi lingual, multi-cultural, multi ethnic population. As the information collected by governments may be politically sensitive, appropriate security mechanisms may be an important technical consideration. At the same time, many other policy issues need to be resolved, such as authentication and confidentiality. Even if internet population is growing in India, there is a significant portion of the people who may not be able to access services for various reasons like limited access to ICT technologies, low literacy in Computer. India lacks a full-fledged ICT framework for implementation of e-governance.

Lack of infrastructure in rural and urban area, concern for security, less Computer literacy lack of awareness of the function, social and economic disparity, security & privacy through bio-metrics etc. are the critical issues. Criminalization of politics, corruption, and illiteracy, lack of infrastructure, security and privacy of personal and financial data are the other major constraints.Simple tasks may be easier to perform through electronic government access. Many changes, such as marital status or address changes can be along process and take a lot of time and paper work. E-government allows these tasks to be performed efficiently. While making government services available online certainly saves time, and costs incurred by people in accessing them, it may not necessarily improve lives of the majority. E-governance makes it

easier to pay electricity and water bills online but it cannot provide assured electricity and water supplies to everyone. Up to a third of India's population especially those in rural areas are not connected to the national grid. They are cut off from the development, progress and opportunity and e-governance is not going to make a difference to them. Similarly ability to pay bills online would not make any sense when majority of the Indian population lacks access to clean drinking water. Providing assured water and electric supply, basic health, education and other infrastructure facilities assume precedence. These have to be provided as pre-requisites of e-governance and not the outcomes-government may put information on fingertips but the common person remains as helpless as before. Corruption continues to be endemic at all levels. From a rank of 70 when national e-governance plan came into action in 2006, India has slipped to 94 in the 2012. Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International, and trust in the government systems continues to deteriorate.

The conclusion therefore is that the good governance agenda has distinct political and bureaucratic elements to it. While the former emphasizes the strengthening of democracy by making governments transparent and accountable, the latter emphasizes administrative simplification through decentralization. In reality, the two are closely linked and mutually reinforcing. By contrast, the critical governance literature conceptualizes this link "through dialectic between central governments, state government, local administration, political bodies, civil society organizations and citizens" (Madon 2009: 43). Further, the state remains an important player in the execution of development programs, the good governance agenda, through its prescriptions of efficiency, accountability, and democratization, calls for a rollback of the state. E-governance is advocated as a tool to achieve the policy prescriptions of the good governance agenda. However, there is ample evidence that many e-governance projects, in the developing and the developed world, have not resulted in significant improvements in citizen services and welfare. The reasons being many projects do not qualify as e-governance projects. They may be classified as e-administration or e-services applications despite their developmental objectives. There is little knowledge "about the extent to which these types of e-governance projects promote development, as research in this area has been conducted in a largely anecdotal and piecemeal fashion" (Madon 2009: 57). The impact of these projects is poorly understood, as

most have taken a managerial view, focusing on efficiency and cost reduction rather than assessing gains to society.

E-Governance Solutions

ICT provides many ways to achieve E-governance. Maintenance of ICT is a key success factor in rapidly changing technical regularity environment. Information management aims at reducing cost and improving performance. Economic issues are mainly concerned with return of investment. Cost of implementation, operational and evolutionary maintenance must be low enough to guarantee a good cost/benefit ratio. (Shah 2007: 135)A well skilled labour force is needed for timely and regular maintenance. The Government should look after inter-operability standards, security standards, technical standards and quality standards. In India, Government websites have no uniform standard. It is very important for the Government to set uniform national standards to be followed by all the state governments. The solution lies not merely in creating more institutions but in strengthening and reforming the existing institutions to deliver results.

Complete implementation of e-governance in India will include hardware and software infrastructure. The infrastructure must be built by Government, private sector as well as individuals. The Government needs to build its institutional capacity including training of Government employees and appointment of experts. The Government has to equip the departments with hi-technology. For better implementation of e-governance, the Government will need to frame laws which will fully incorporate the technology. The IT laws need to be flexible to adjust with the rapidly changing technology. National Informatics Centre (NIC) is providing the base of network and a wide range of ICT services to government organizations throughout India. Several drafts have also been passed by IT department to implement E-Governance with the new technologies. E-Government is to be able to offer an increased portfolio of public services to citizens in an efficient and cost effective manner. In India, where literacy rate is low, e-governance is a real challenge. Lack of IT literacy and awareness regarding benefits of e-governance has to be emphasized. The people are often non-expert users and need guidance. Educational system encourages innovation and qualified manpower. To be effective, Governmental websites must be user friendly. The web sites should also have the facility to

access in native or local language. A reconceptualization of government services is mandatory for successful implementation and to get social acceptance. This will happen only if government processes will be organized for citizens' convenience. The citizens should be made aware and acquainted of the facilities offered by the e-government infrastructure. E-governance means less interaction with government servants, which in turn will reduce bribery and corruption. This task require an honest and strong will power of the politicians and leaders.

The judiciary as a whole needs to be trained in new technology. The Government should publish all the information online through websites. This can be facilitated through centralized storage of information and localization of content management. The citizens are entitled to know information of the Government. The people need to be educated and made e-literate for e-governance to flourish. Government can educate the people about the advantages of e-governance. This can also be done through raising awareness of the leaders who can motivate the people to go online. Indian setup is quasi-federal. Therefore, Centre-State and inter-state cooperation is necessary for smooth functioning of the democratic process. This cooperation is also necessary for successful implementation of e-governance. The states can cooperate with the Centre to create a National Citizen Database. Finally it is important to set various standards to bring e-governance to the quality and performance level of private corporate sector.

IT infrastructure is the backbone of E-governance. It is unlikely that available resources can support a full replacement of existing application. Hardware should be fully compatible with future technologies as well. Finally, some legal aspect, like security and privacy, must be considered, as personal data are processed and stored, and financial transitions must be executed. To cope with such requirements appropriate technical changes must be done. Multi-model application can make it more successful. The beneficial impact of ICT and of e-governance on the rural economy and quality of life is now recognized. (Shah 2007: 133)Independence from hardware and software platforms is primary requisite for portable application. Strong and effective rules related with IT has to be formulated and strongly implemented. This presupposes the adoption and use of security measures more particularly empowering and training judiciary and law enforcement manpower. Other issues like underutilization of existing ICT infrastructure, attitude of government departments and government officers need a proper counseling, lack of coordination between government department and solution developers need to be focused. The

strong database needed for a successful e-governance is vulnerable to fraud. A proper and well placed database of all the citizens is one of the major requirements for a successful e-governance. Every citizen should have a unique Id number and password. The citizens can access their information and transactions through this but at the same time the other people won't be able to access their record. The individual will come to know about their electricity bill, bank statements, phone bill etc. and can transact with all or any of the department at the same time. This one database will be common and accessible for all the departments. The strongly secured and systematic database will also be able to tackle the security issue for the country. There are attempts being made to come up with "Biometric" techniques. The password can be replaced as an individual's mark of identity. Similarly, password can be replaced by fingerprints or facial characteristics to verify the identity. Common Biometrics is one of the important evolving technologies, which will ensure the security and privacy issues as well. A smart card with citizens name, address, financial information, personal information etc. fully supported and secured by Biometrics may be the key solution. A fully secured card with easy operability can be used for all transactions, and information. (Shah 2007: 137). Computer & internet education well placed IT & security rules transaction through other media like phone or mobile or cable needs to be promoted. Progressive legislations provide an enabling environment and empower citizens. Novel legislations can work only with robust delivery mechanisms. Corruption leads to denial of equitable distribution of benefits. Complexity and opacity of rules and procedures, discretion in the exercise of power, and weak enforcement of legal provisions are factors contributing to corruption.

An effective e-government program can be achieved by:

• Making a policy choice in favour of computerization.

• Ministry of Finance can be asked to provide concessions to the agencies which would like to fund the leasing of computers.

• Establishing complete connectivity between various ministries and departments so that transfer of files and papers could be done through Internet.

• supplying information to the public in a language that they understand and are comfortable with.

• Workshops, seminars, and training programmes are required to be organized to spread awareness among the employees at all levels.

• Making cyber laws available to the public.

• Build supporting infrastructures of power to bridge the digital divide between the rural and urban India.

Citizen's concern on privacy of their life and confidentiality of the personal data need to be technically supported. Privacy and confidentiality has to be highly valued in establishing and maintaining websites. An ideal Cyber Security Policy will ensure the existence of a sound and secure e-governance and critical infrastructure base in India. The security and safety of various ICT platforms and critical infrastructures in India must be considered on a priority basis. Acceptance and usability by a large variety of people make e-governance successful. Since the social disparity in India is very high, the interface must be usable by rich or poor, disabled or elderly people, understandable by low literacy or non-native language people, etc. Social, geographical and economic disparity issues have to be removed. Internet connection through satellite, phone lines or through cable or television should be accessible for all specially to the people in rural areas. As Accentor has defined an approach to implement e-governance projects: 'Thinking big, start small and scale fast'.

E-Governance in India: Myth or Reality

India is known for its competence in information technology but ranked 125 in the 2012 UN global e-government ranking (Nath 2013). It is surpassed by countries such as Indonesia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and Mongolia. Even among the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries, India is at the bottom when it comes to e-government (Nath 2013). This does not mean that there are no efforts made on e-governance. On the contrary, India has successfully initiated several e-governance projects, including the establishment of State Wide Area Networks (SWANs), State Data Centers (SDCs), Common Services Centers (CSCs) and the Unique Identification Authentication (UID) or the Aadhaar card project. India performs well in mega e-government projects. It is one of the pioneers in adopting electronic voting and the voting for national and state elections has been totally electronic since 2004. The spread of e-governance initiatives have had a positive impact on the quality of governance. E-governance

can be attained in four steps: Information or Cataloguing, Transaction, Vertical Integration and horizontal integration (Layne and Lee 2001). India has already achieved the first and the second stage of e-governance. And presently the country is on the verge of attaining the third stage, and moving towards the fourth or the final stage, that is, horizontal integration, which is most challenging.

The common service centres are now established in all parts of the country, and there are almost 130,000 of them providing range of services including payment of bills and taxes, getting government certificates, filing applications, and agricultural and health services. The national optical fiber network provides broadband connectivity up to the block level in all the states, and will extend to the village level to connect all the 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats in the country(Nath2014).E-Governance is enabling good governance through various means. E-governance in Social Welfare is one such initiative.

a) Women empowerment: Under the National e-Governance Plan Common Services Centers can be an effective vehicle to help women acquire digital literacy skills that enable them to become socially and politically active. The scheme for empowering women in Rural India through Digital Literacy envisages training of 2500 women on the course of Computer Concepts designed and administered.

b) National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP): The National Social Assistance Porgramme came into effect from 15th August,1995. It represents a significant step towards the fulfillment of the Directive Principles in Article 41 of the Constitution. The programme introduced a National Policy for Social Assistance for the poor. E-Governance in NSAP includes the following schemes:

• Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS)
• Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS)
• Indira Gandhi National Disability Pension Scheme (IGNDPS)

There is the need to redefine the linkage between governance and development, as this will ultimately decide the implementation of development policies. At the macro level, the roles of

development policies and strategies are important. At the micro level, there is the need to focus on how community members benefit from improved governance. The in-between level, comprising numerous "local administrative, political and social 'intermediaries,' provides an interface between the formal and informal governance structure to bring about development benefits for communities" (Madon2009: 53).These informal structures of negotiation and coordination that play a vital role in supporting formal interventions and therefore need to be acknowledged and theorized. 'Good governance' is essential for human development and to uphold the principles of democracy. This discourse also promotes information and communication technologies and e-governance to improve the functioning of the state. It aims to improve the efficiency of the state by enhancing its accountability. However, the linkage between better technology and better governance and ultimately better development is not automatic.

Concluding Remarks

E-government allows for government transparency. Government transparency allows the public to be informed about the government's policies. What ails India is not e-governance deficit but governance-deficit. It is good governance that will propel and sustain economic growth in India. It is good governance that will open up new employment opportunities. Good governance can restore trust of citizens in governments and make governments accountable to them. Citizens have to play an active role as democracy cannot be healthy without participation. The country needs to make serious effort in implementing the policies. The biggest contribution of e-governance would be if it channelizes all energies, debates and resources into a singular mission of improving governance in India not just for service delivery but also in policy settings, resources allocation, and its implementation. Good governance should be technology-independent so that the focus is on providing good governance to everyone. The institutions should be strengthened and re-invented in order to be competitive, efficient and accountable. Good governance is not given naturally in any system. It has to be nurtured by developing institutions of democracy. Good governance implies a framework that has well-being of the people as its focal point.

E-governance in India is an evolutionary phenomenon, and requires a change in the mindset of all – citizen, executives and the government. With the support of the Internet, the government processes can be made efficient, effective, and citizen friendly. There are many challenging issues lying ahead. Security is the main concern for the citizen. To be effective, e-government should be integrated within a holistic approach that includes a supportive and democratic leadership, a viable communication infrastructure, and qualified personnel to operate the new technology. The government needs to make significant investments in areas such as IT training, assessment and awareness. The need of the hour is to maintain a proper database of all the citizens and well developed infrastructure. The strong political will power and the social acceptability of e-governance in urban as well as rural areas is required. From the study, it is clear that e-governance initiatives have been found successful in ensuring good governance. Despite various limitations e-governance has proved meritorious service to the people at large.

"Nations worldwide … must be part of making the transition to e-Governanceas the new paradigm in public sector reform. The pains of inaction (...) will be greater than the trials and tribulations of action"(Bare :55).

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