

## **ICT BASED GOVERNANCE: THE KEY TO LESS GOVERNMENT AND MORE GOVERNANCE**

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*Democracy involves setting up constitutional norms and providing fundamental rights to its citizens to achieve goals of justice and equality. However, to be democratic in true sense goes much beyond providing the theoretical framework. Democracy means inclusive growth. It means ensuring the availability of public utilities and other benefits to the grass root levels while maintaining transparency and accountability at the same time. This type of governance requires a change in work culture and processes. The emphasis has to shift from traditional manual administration to digitally supported management. This brings in the application of ICT to governance. Application of ICT in governance helps achieve more governance with lesser resources. The paper seeks to understand the concept of governance, role of ICT in governance and challenges faced in application of ICT to governance.*

Key words: ICT, governance, e-Governance

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To understand the meaning of Governance and ICT;
2. To know the meaning and scope of e-Governance;
3. To study the various government initiatives to promote ICT in Governance;
4. To identify the various challenges faced in the implementation of ICT initiatives

### **Governance**

Governance is the key to politics. Good governance is crucial for success of every organization be it educational, corporate or NGO. The same principle applies to the governance of a country also. The achievement of a government is judged by its ability to provide transparent, interactive and accountable governance. Good governance means providing the benefits and facilities to the grass root levels. Good governance builds the confidence of its citizens, ensures inclusive growth and helps in nation building. Effective governance attracts both domestic and international investors and aids in boosting the economy of the country. The Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi has also given the slogan of LESS GOVERNMENT AND MORE GOVERNANCE. Government has realized that good governance cannot be achieved merely by adopting traditional method of administration. Rather the need of the hour is to digital.

### **Information and Communications Technology**

Information and communication technology means use of communication and internet technologies to provide access to information. This includes the dissemination of information through the use of mobile phones, laptops and other internet based mediums. It implies extensive usage of digital media like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and other social media platforms. It involves ensuring networking, connectivity, relevant software and selecting information delivery mechanisms and systems to make sure benefits reaches to the lowest level in the hierarchy.

### **ICT and Governance**

Application of ICT in governance brings us to what is known as electronic governance or e-Governance. The term e-Governance is of recent origin. E-Governance generally means governance via use of information and communication technologies.

UNESCO defines e-Governance, as “e-Governance is the use of ICT by different actors of the society with the aim to improve their access to information and to build their capacities. It also encourages the citizens’ participation in the decision making process.”<sup>1</sup>

The Council of Europe defines it as “E-Governance is about the use of information technology to raise the quality of the services governments deliver to citizens and businesses. It is hoped that it will also reinforce the connection between public officials and communities thereby leading to a stronger, more accountable and inclusive democracy.”<sup>2</sup>

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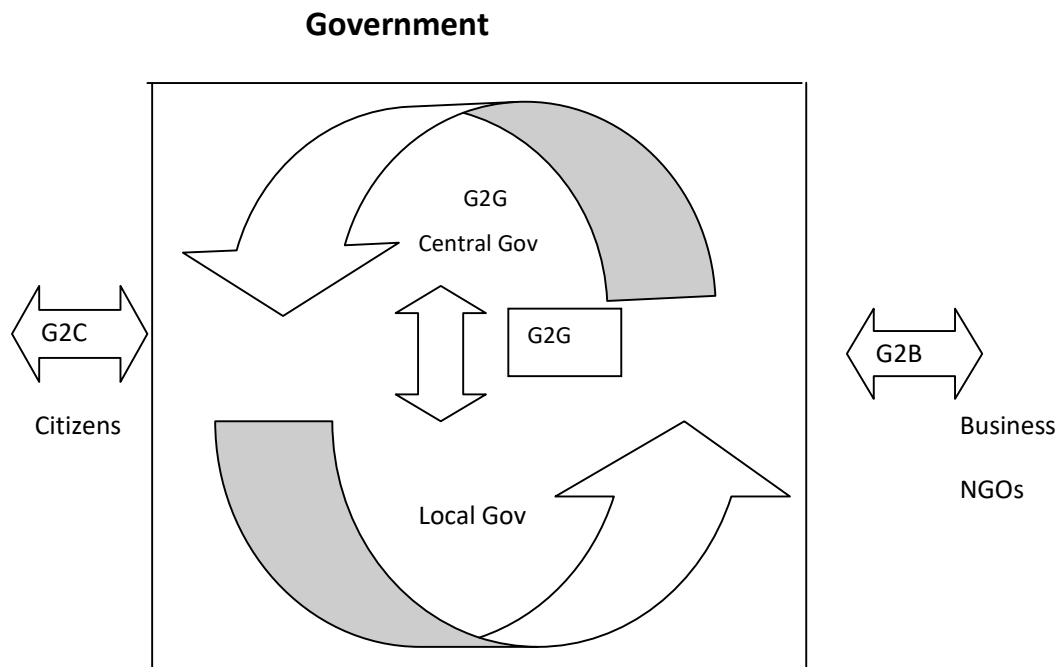
<sup>1</sup><http://portal.unesco.org/>

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.coe.int/t/dgap/democracy/Activities/GGIS/E-governance/Default\\_en.asp](https://www.coe.int/t/dgap/democracy/Activities/GGIS/E-governance/Default_en.asp)

### Types of Interactions in E-Governance

Governance requires interaction between different participants in governance. These interfaces may be described as follows:

1. **G2G (Government to Government)**—This involves the interaction within and between various government entities. The aim is not only to achieve the automation of government services but also to ensure sharing of information between government agencies both vertically and horizontally. G2G will help to bring the integration between the services offered at various levels of government.
2. **G2C (Government to Citizens)** – In G2C there is a two way interaction between the government and citizens. People can access all the public services digitally instead of actually visiting the office. This type of interface focusses on making all the public services/ citizen centric and citizen friendly.



3. **G2B (Government to Business)** – In this type of governance there is an interface between the government and business entities. G2B helps the business in performing various activities like obtaining licenses, permits, filing online returns, submitting documents by the company to ROC (Registrar of Companies) online without being struck in red tapism and bureaucracy. This ultimately results in savings in cost and time and creates a more congenial environment for a business to flourish.

### Benefits of E-Governance

E-Governance is transforming the way governance is done. It will lead to the following benefits, some of them are:

**Speed:**—Information is transmitted instantly through internet unlike manual system where it takes weeks to forward information from one department to another. E-Governance reduces the service delivery time.

**Transparency:**—E-Governance involves uploading every information as when it is received in public domain. This helps bring greater transparency in the system. This way a customer gets constant updates as to the status of the services sought. For example: - now a days in case of passport, citizen gets continuous updates as to the status of passport generation through SMS. This is in stark contrast to earlier manual system where there was lot of red tapism and corruption.

**Accountability:**—Once the process becomes transparent, accountability is automatically fixed. A citizen gets to know the stage or department where the service sought is struck. E-Governance makes the governments more accountable to citizens.

**Wider Reach:**—With increased penetration of internet and smart phones, government can ensure providing the access to public utilities and other services to the remotest areas at a much lower cost. Adequate infrastructure is already there, government has to just to create new process to address the larger sections of society. This way e-Governance guarantees inclusive growth.

### Government Initiatives for ICT Based Governance

To achieve extensive and wider e-Governance, National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) was launched by the government in 2006, comprising 27 mission mode projects. In 2011, 4 projects - Health, Education, Public

Distribution System and Posts were added increasing the number to 31 The NeG plan is not a term plan, it is a long term plan with an aim to achieve highest level of e-Governance across the country.

**Table 1.1: List of Mission Mode Projects**

Central MMPs	State MMPs	Integrated MMPs
Banking	Agriculture	CSC
Central Excise & Customs	Commercial Taxes	e-Biz
Income Tax (IT)	e-District	e-Courts
Insurance	Employment Exchange	e-Procurement
MCA21	Land Records(NLRMP)	EDI For eTrade
Passport	Municipalities	National e-governance Service Delivery Gateway
Immigration, Visa and Foreigners Registration& Tracking	e-Panchayats	
Pension	Police(CCTNS)	
e-Office	Road Transport	
Posts	Treasuries Computerization	
UID	PDS	
	Education	
	Health	

Source: <https://meity.gov.in/content/mission-mode-projects>

Following are some of the recent successful e-governance projects provided under the National e-Governance Plan:-

• **RAILNET**

Indian railways have created a nation-wide network called Railnet. It enables better and quick decision making by enabling uninterrupted flow of information vertically and horizontally. It also provides various interactive services to the customers like IVRS, national train enquiry, checking status of reservation and e-ticketing.

• **BHOOMI- LAND RECORDS COMPUTERISATION**

Bhoomi is flag ship project started by the Government of Karnataka in the year 2000. It is a basically land records management system. All the tenancy and cultivation certificates (RTCs) have been digitized in Karnataka. This has done way with the handwritten land records. Land records often got destroyed or the poor farmers who were took loans from the rich landlords against their land papers had their lands confiscated in case of non-payments. Computerisation of land records has put an end to disputes regarding the ownership of land.

• **POST**

Post offices have also realized the speed and timeliness of electronic communication offered referred to as e-mail. Given the digital divide that India has, still many people in rural areas don't have direct access to internet. To overcome this infrastructural constraint and to deliver the benefit of e-mail, post offices have started ePost service. ePost combines the benefits of electronic transmission as well as physical delivery. The sender can deliver the message as a soft copy, the post office delivers it as a hard copy to the addressee for a nominal charge of ₹ 10 per A4 size.

• **ONLINE PENSION STATUS ENQUIRY**

Government of India has started a portal to address all pension related issues and queries of senior citizens. Senior citizens may have trouble visiting every now and then for redressal of their pension related queries. Now by logging on this portal they can not only check their pension status but can also see grievance redressal status. Besides this, portal also facility of calculation of pension and gratuity amount.

• **ONLINE TAX RETURNS**

Income tax department has completely done away with manual filing of returns. Every tax payer can file the return online sitting at home. The tax payer can also verify the return using Aadhaar OTP or bank OTP which also

dispenses the need to post the acknowledgement to income tax department, Bengaluru office. Not only income tax returns vendors can also file others types of returns like service tax and GST online.

- **ONLINE FILING BY THE COMPANY WITH THE REGISTRAR(MCA 21)**

The Ministry of Corporate affairs introduced e-Governance initiative MCA21 for the companies. It has dispensed with the requirement of manual filing by the company with registrar of companies. A company is required to file minutes of almost every event. Now, an online filing can be done by the authorised officer under his digital signature.

- **EXAMINATION RESULTS PORTAL**

Now a days, the results of almost all professional and degree exams are uploaded on college or government website. CBSE class 12<sup>th</sup> results are also posted online. Unlike previous system, the candidate does not have to report to concerned department or look for newspaper to check the result. It is available on click of a mouse.

- **GYANDOOT E-GOVERNANCE PROJECT**

Gyandoot is an initiative of Madhya Pradesh Government started way back in January 2000. It is intranet based project started by the government to provide information to rural population and to act as interface between administration and people. Various services offered under it are mandi rates, caste certificate, rural hindi email, income certificate, domicile certificate and public grievances redressal.

- **JUDIS**

JUDIS is online information system which acts as a library of various judgments passed by Supreme Court of India and also by many of the High Courts. All Supreme Court judgments published in SCR – the Supreme Court Publication since 1950 are available on JUDIS.

- **PASSPORT WEBSITE**

Passport Seva is an online initiative undertaken by the Ministry of External affairs, Government of India. This portal provides single window access to the citizens of India for all their passport /visa/consular service's needs. A citizen can log onto the portal to apply online for passport and other services. Even the payment of fees is done online. Not only this, a citizen can track the status of their application and grievance redressal online. This online system has dispensed with the long standing queues, role of torts and corruption in the passport system.

- **RURALBAZAR**

This initiative is undertaken by Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. This portal seeks to provide the platform to rural artisans to showcase and sell their products. The Ministry organizes various fairs under the scheme SARAS to help the artisans. Entire process starting from registration, shortlisting for participation is done online. Through a single portal artisan can get all the requisite information.

- **FRIENDS**

FRIENDS project started in Kerala under public partnership model has been a huge success since its launch in 2002. The project is currently operational in 13 out of 14 districts of Kerala. This is single window access portal for both citizens and businesses. Citizens can pay taxes, access services like various social welfare schemes, health services and employment services. It also caters to the various needs of business for setting up a new or running existing venture.

- **RECENT INITIATIVES**

- **DIRECT CASH TRANSFER**

Government has now ensured direct cash transfer for various subsidies and benefits to the recipients. The subsidy or the benefit is directly transferred to the beneficiaries account. The beneficiary just has to link the bank account with Aadhaar and provide the necessary details to the disbursing agency. This way government has ensured that 100% benefits reach the right person with in time.

- **DIGITAL PAYMENTS**

Since demonetization in 2016, government has been promoting a cashless economy. A customer can now transfer money from one bank account to another, pay utility bills either through Net banking, debit card, credit card, wallets or UPI. Initially people had apprehensions using online mode but now they are getting comfortable with it. Digital payment creates a audit trail and thus will help remove black money from the economy.

### **E-Governance: Challenges**

Though the government is making lot of effort to enhance the reach the e-governance initiatives but is still it's a long way to go. This may largely be due to the following reasons:

**Resistance to Change:** - Moving to IT based governance requires change in work culture and habits. Change is often resisted. Both citizens and business may resist change depending upon their biases. It is one of the major challenges for the government to overcome and inculcate the habit of using IT among the citizens.

**Trust:** - Many people in India especially older population have trust issues in using ICT based applications. They are apprehensive regarding the privacy and security of the information shared by them on these portals.

**Computer Literacy:** - It is again a major challenge in ICT application. Computer literacy rate is still very low among senior citizens and rural population. Though it has improved a lot but it is still way behind the required mark.

**Recruitment of Skilled Personnel:** - ICT based governance requires employment of not only skilled personnel but of those personnel who are citizen centric and have desire to bring a change.

**Multiplicity of The LanguagesSpoken:** - India is a multilingual country. Every region has its own regional language. English speaking population in India is very marginal.English is the primary language of interaction on these web portals which is a big hindrance in its wider application. The real challenge is to develop the web content not only in Hindi and English but also in regional languages.

**Infrastructural Constraints:** - India is a developing country with huge geographical diversity. Some of the remotest and rural areas still do not have basic infrastructural facility in the form of electricity, internet penetration, and computers. So introducing ICT based governance is a big challenge in these areas.

### Conclusion

India has been a democratic nation since its Independence. Since then, government has been introducing various social welfare schemes to achieve the objectives of justice and equality. But the traditional methods were marred with the evils of corruption, red tapism and bureaucracy. The digital method helps overcome all these evils. Introduction of ICT based applications is the only way to future. Government has introduced various IT based initiatives both at central and state levels which have been fairly successful. But still complete transformation has not been achieved. The usage of these IT applications is still low. There are certain challenges which need to be addressed for complete transition. The real task for the government is to switch to web based governance. This requires not only setting up necessary infrastructure but also motivating and inspiring citizens to move towards IT based interaction with government.

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