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## ***E-GOVERNANCE: A TOOL FOR ACHIEVING GOOD GOVERNANCE***

***Dr. T. Rajani Kumari***

*Faculty, Dept. of Public Administration, University College for Women,  
Koti, Hyderabad, Telangana State, India*

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**Abstract:** From the earliest civilisation to the present national and international scenario, the need for good governance has always been indispensable and assumed utmost significance for efficient and effective administration which provides the foundation to a democratic framework of the country. Good governance is an essential requirement for the success of democracy. In India, digital governance has been legalised by the Information Technology Act of 2000. This Act is a watershed in conceptualising administrative reforms in India. More importantly e-governance is certainly an attack on red-tapism. It is an instrument for achieving 'good governance especially with regard to improving efficiency, transparency and making interface with government user-friendly'. E-governance involves new styles of leadership, new ways of debating and deciding policy and investment, new ways of accessing education, new ways of listening to citizens and new ways of organising and delivering information and services. In this way it is a tool for bringing citizens closer to government and administration. The ultimate goal is to bring about simple, moral, accountable, responsive and transparent (SMART) governance. The present paper is an attempt to analyse the role of e-governance in enabling good governance.

**Keywords:** Digital governance, E-governance, Good governance, Information Technology, Information Communication Technology

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**Introduction:** Indian government has announced 25th December as Good Governance Day. The need for good governance for a country's development cannot be overemphasised. The challenge before the government is greater than ever before. The turbulent business environment that is prevailing in the world in general and in India in particular, has triggered a compelling need to search for a new management paradigm that will enable the government to succeed. There is an urgent need for the government to get closer to its citizens. While quality of service is a prerequisite, innovation and speed would add value. There is a need to redesign governmental processes and to recognise and select good technology solutions to ensure good governance. The inability of the bureaucracy to change with time only hampered the credibility of the governments that came in. Therefore there is a need for "A Government which is responsive to the needs of the people, whose transactions have clearly defined time-bound accountability and whose decisions are readily available for public scrutiny. E-governance will offer a new vision to governance and an opportunity to obliterate age-old systems that have now turned anachronistic. Effective use of technology is increasingly becoming synonymous with good governance. ICT is transforming the way life goes on. IT is all about connectivity. Connectivity brings proximity, which improves the delivery of services by the government. Local self-government maximum attention as they are the cutting-edge and therefore immensely affect the daily lives of the citizens. The concept of e-governance has brought about a paradigm shift in IT usage and applications for good governance. It attempts to take public services and the government, literally to the doorstep of the citizens through IT.

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E-governance facilitates the delivery of government services to the masses through procedural simplicity, speed and convenience.

**E-Governance in India:** In India, the concept of e-governance has its origin during seventies with a focus on development of government applications in the areas- defence, economic monitoring, planning and the deployment of IT to manage data intensive functions related to elections, census, tax administration etc. However, the more focus has been given to people's participation in the process of good governance. Former President of India APJ Abdul Kalam has also emphasised the need for a sound e-governance system to ensure transparent administration and a corruption-free society. He opined that, "all government programmes must consider citizens as privileged customers and become accountable for providing all services without interruptions and hassles. One of the means to ensure this is by incorporation of a sound e-governance system". Good governance is an important goal recognized by many countries and several nations have taken up specific initiatives for open government. There should be continuous effort to put the citizens in the centre of focus of governance. Citizens should be perceived as customers and clients.

E-governance has emerged because of the increasing interest of governments and citizens around the world to experiment with and learn to exploit new media and the latest technologies. It involves new ways of debating and deciding policy and investment, accessing education, listening to education and organising and delivering informal services. E-governance is also seen as a multi-dimensional concept, an IT driven methodology that improves efficiency in administration, brings about transparency and leads to the reduction of costs in running the government. There are three main domains of e-governance- 1. improving governmental processes (e-administration) 2. connecting citizens (e-citizens & e-services) 3. building external interactions. (e-society)

E-governance and e-government initiatives now enable citizens to access government documents, order publications, file taxes, order vital records and renew licenses and permits from any location with an internet connection. In addition, e-government is transforming organizations by breaking down organizational boundaries and providing access to information, enhancing communication and facilitating democratic processes.

**Good Governance and E-Governance:** Governance is the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development. According to the World Bank, good governance was necessary for sound economic, human and institutional development and emphasised four key elements of governance: (a). public sector management; (b). accountability; (c).legal framework for development and (d). Information and transparency. UNDP has characterised governance as being participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follow the rule of law. Governance is thus another mode of conceptualising public administration in the changed global scenario.

E- Governance or e-government involves the provision of public services and information sharing through electronic media. It harnesses IT and ICTs to increase the efficiency and economy of public administration. It involves both designing the public service systems and the much wider transformation of the relationship between public and private actors, thereby effecting a renewal of the democratic decision-making process. The power of ICT tools have opened up possibilities much beyond the improvement syndrome by permitting radical

possibilities in decision-making, quick processing of data and information transfer by automated electronic methods instantly. The power of ICT has permitted governments to adopt a 'linked-up' or 'holistic' approach by connecting various departments and organs of government as never before. In the earlier stages of E-government the internal functioning of the government was assisted by electronic methods. These have gradually taken over the external functioning also and the efficiencies generated through computerisation and limited networking in the earlier stages have been extended to the government's delivery systems.

The transformation has taken place in the following stages:

1. Improvement in referencing and filing systems in paper laden offices
2. Use of computers for storage and processing of data
3. Linking of computers in Local Area Networks and Wide Area Networks
4. Geographical penetration of connectivity in rural and remote areas
5. Connectivity through Internet and Intranet
6. Opening of public service outlets for information and simple services
7. Using ICT for decision-making in government

E-government does not necessarily require public involvement in determining or shaping the manner of service deliveries although they are created for the benefit of the citizens who are treated like customers. The use of ICT has led to what is described as E-governance the intimate dimensions of which include E-commerce, E-democracy and E-citizen. The electronic tools and networking have made possible the 'citizen' involvement in decision-making. E-democracies can carve a much larger role for the citizen.

**Types of Interactions in E-Governance:** E-Governance facilitates interaction between different stakeholders in governance. These are described below:

1. **G2G (Government to Government)**—Here, ICT is used not only to restructure the governmental processes involved in the functioning of government entities but also to increase the flow of information and services within and between different entities. This kind of interaction is only within the government sphere and can be both horizontal and vertical.
2. **G2C (Government to Citizen)** - In this, an interface is created between the government and citizens which enables the citizens to benefit from efficient delivery of a large range of public services. This expands the availability and accessibility of public services on the one hand and improves the quality of services on the other. The primary purpose is to make government, citizen-friendly.
3. **G2B (Government to Business)**—In this case, e-governance tools are used to aid the business community- providers of goods and services—to seamlessly interact with the government. The purpose is to cut red-tape, save time, reduce operational costs and to create a more transparent business environment when dealing with the government.
4. **G2E (Government to Employee)**—Government is the biggest employer and like any organisation, it has to interact with its employees on a regular basis. This interaction is a two-way process between the organisation and the employee. Use of IT makes these interactions fast and efficient and also increase the employee satisfaction levels.

In order to ensure good governance for the country, the E-governance system will have to come good on four important principles:

1. **Accountability:** The major challenge of governance is the lack of accountability. Problems that a government faces are complex because the needs of the people are rapidly changing.

To manage such complex tasks, clear accountability is required. Presently, there is no clearly defined personnel who are responsible for handling any specific task and is solely responsible for the same. There is always a game of passing the buck from one department to the other when a common man tries to access the government services. To avoid this problem, the governance system must define the personnel and the stakeholders who are accountable for the provision of services. There is need to classify the requests from the people into regular administration problems, interdepartmental problems and policy level problems so that targeting of problems is more precise.

2. **Transparency:** The second major requirement is transparency. The last government suffered majorly because of multiple scams that were unearthed by the media. People are now demanding far more transparency in the government transactions than they ever did in the spast. Therefore there is a need for not only working in a transparent manner but also communicate to the people that every transaction is happening as per the mandate without any violation. Therefore E-governance systems should be intelligent enough to automate the decision making process so that the transactions are highly transparent and are perceived to be transparent by society at large. It would also ensure that transactions of the government are as per the mandated criteria and that there is no scope for a biased decision making, which is the root cause for lack of trust in the governance systems in India.
3. **Responsiveness:** Thirdly, government as an entity has to be responsive to the needs of the people. India is the world's largest democracy and accounts for almost 17 per cent of the world's population. With such a large population which is divided by diverse cultures and life styles, there is bound to be difference in the expectations from the government by citizens across the length and breadth of the country. Hence there is a need for a governance system which is responsive to the needs of the people. Since major problems of the people are more of administrative nature, the citizen should be given the opportunity to participate in the governance system. The true nature of democracy is to ensure that voices of the people are heard. Therefore, E-governance systems must ensure that the systems created by them are responsive to the requirement of the different sections of population.
4. **Speedier and Seamless Services:** Lastly, governance has to be time relevant and easy to be obtained. Today in the multinational organizations, a loss of information systems for even few minutes can cause a loss of revenue for the organization. In a country like India, which is full of complex issues, cultures and expectations, utmost importance is to be given to ensure there is a continuous service delivery at every nook and corner of the country and that too, at the right time. National Telecom Policy of India, 2012 envisages providing high speed and high quality broadband access to every habitation in India before 2020. This could be the backbone of speedy E-governance delivery for the country.

More governance and less government has been one of the most important promises of PM Narendra Modi. In pursuit of making his promise a reality, he has initiated Digital India campaign which envisages improving governance in the country by centering around three core pillars, namely Digital Infrastructure as a utility to every citizen, governance and services on Demand and Digital Empowerment of citizens. Full scope of these steps would be felt increasingly in years to come.

**Conclusion:** The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a very rapid development and spread of Information and Communication Technology along with the advent of user-friendly computing systems and networking. The new technology has placed a powerful tool in the hands of the society that could be used to make life easier and better for all in several dimensions of human activities. Almost all areas of social and commercial activity have been touched by the electronic

revolution. Governments also have been quick to pick up its applications for providing better information and services. E-governance provides an opportunity to bring about a change in the traditional bureaucratic nature of functioning characterised by red-tapism, secrecy and inaccessibility of information. It improves governmental functioning by making it more transparent and accessible. Good governance will depend on the effective utilization of the E-governance systems of the government. The use of IT will ensure that the government provides responsive, high speed and reliable service to its citizens. The empowerment of the citizen with the E-governance will ensure that his right to obtain services from the government will be fulfilled in a time bound manner. The use of IT tools to automate the decision making can play a vital role in bringing down the corruption and misappropriation of funds of the government so that it can offer more Governance. Good governance, along with E-governance will lead the future of India in creating an efficient and effective governance system.

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