E-Governance Initiatives for Good Governance in Panchayat Raj Institutions

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Abstract

The aim of the government is to implement the mission of good governance, and every effort is made for the implementation of good governance at all levels of the government.

Good governance is about providing an efficient and effective administrative that is committed to providing the quality of services to the people. It is about what people expect from the administration and the willingness and capacity of the administration to fulfil their expectations. The concept of good governance and citizen centric administration are intimately connected. Citizen centricity with the aim of ensuring citizen's welfare and citizen's satisfaction is critical for any government at local, state or national level to execute and especially meet the expectations of the people.

I. Introduction

A welfare state is a positive state which is committed to the welfare of the people. Modern democratic states are characterised by welfare orientation. The government plays as important role in socio-economic development of the nation. This means that every activity if individuals from womb to tomb is regulated and controlled by government. This resulted in the expansion of number of services. Hence, ministries, departments and agencies are established to provide large number of services to people. Welfare is a type of government to support the citizens of the society. Nowadays, all the sections in the society judge the government by their governance. Good governance is about providing an efficient and effective administrative that is committed to providing the quality of services to the people. It is about what people expect from the administration and the willingness and capacity of the administration to fulfil their expectations.

Good Governance

Good governance concentrates efficient delivery of public services to the expectation and satisfaction of the people to all the sections. Nowadays, the citizens' expectations from the government are very high. Citizens of the country face many hurdles for availing various services from the government. Firstly, unawareness of services of the government that are available to them, secondly, unawareness about the process for availing these services,

Redtapism, attitude problem of the civil servants in addition to distance, lack of infrastructure and the transport facility. It is challenge for the officer to reach the user and make request for the delivery of these services. opportunities consequences, e-governance can play an important role in providing access to government services for the citizens by making the delivery of services speedier, more efficient and transparent. Further e-governance can also improve the good attitude of the government servants to provide the services to user.

World Bank. In the first report entitled "Sub-Saharan Africa: from crisis to Sustainable growth (1989)", the bank emphasised upon the need for good governance. While the second report entitled as "Governance and Development (1992)" the bank identified a number of aspects of good governance which are political, legal and administrative in nature. The World Bank report stresses on socio-economic upliftment of a country by proper utilization of political power. World Bank also defined good governance as public services that are efficient, a judicial system that is reliable and that is accountable to the public.

So to achieve the goal of good governance e-governance is the means. In words of Dr.A.P.J.Abdul Kalam, the Ex-President of India, "Good governance is a transparent smart e-governance with seamless access, secure and authentic flow of information crossing the interdepartmental barrier and providing a fair and unbiased service to the citizen"

e-Governance

The "e" in e-Governance stands for "electronic". Thus, e-Governance is basically associated with carrying out the functions and achieving the results of governance through the utilization of ICT (Information and Communication Technology).

E-Governance is regarded as a powerful tool in the hands of government for reducing cost, increasing revenues, improving delivery of services. In reality union government, state government and local self-government (rural and urban) are under pressure to deliver services more efficiently at low cost. Thereby e-government is an alternative option both economically and politically.

The internet and mobile computing have ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses and other forms of the government. E-Governance is basically a move towards SMART (Simple Moral Accountable Responsive Transparent) governance.

In India the e-governance momentum gained importance during1990's. In 1996 the then Prime minister of India had inaugurated a conference with chief secretaries to develop "An agenda for Efficient and Responsiveness Administration" to make public service more efficient, honest, accountable and citizen friendly.

Goals of the e-governance

Goals of e-governance are as follows,
➢ Better delivery of government services to citizens
➢ Improve interactions with business and industry
➢ To empower citizens through access to information
➢ To efficiency in government management
➢ Lessen corruption in administration
➢ To increase transparency in administration
➢ To create more convenience to citizens and businesses
➢ Cost reduction and revenue growth
➢ To increase legitimacy of government
➢ Flatten the organizational structure(less hierarchy)
➢ Reduce the paper work and reduce red tapism in administrative process
➢ To improve better planning and co-ordination between different levels of the government.
➢ To increase the citizen participation in governance process
➢ To improve the relationship between the public authorities and civil societies
➢ To re-structure the administrative process.

Advantages of E-Governance
Following are the advantages of E-governance:
➢ **Speed:** Technology makes communication speedier, Internet, Phones, Cell Phones have reduced the time taken in normal communication.
➢ **Cost Reduction:** Most of the government expenditure is appropriated towards the cost of stationery. Paper based communication needs lots of stationery, printers, computers etc. Which leads to continuously heavy expenditure, Internet and phones makes communication cheaper by saving money of the government.
➢ **Transparency:** Use of ICT makes governing process transparent, all the information of the government would be made available on the internet. The citizens can access to the information whenever they need.
➢ **Accountability:** Accountability is Answerability of the government to the people. It is the need of the government to be answerable. An accountable government is a responsible government.
➢ **Convenience:** E-Government brings public services to citizens on their schedule and to their venue.
➢ **Improved customer service:** E-Government allows redeploying resources from back-customer services.
➢ **Increasable Access to Information:** E-Government Improves the accessibility of government information to citizens by allowing it becomes an importment resource in the making the decisions that affect daily life and so it helps in empowerment of citizens.

Interaction in E-governance

There are four types of interactions in e-governance viz., government to citizen (G2C), Government to Business (G2B), government to government, that is, inter-agency relationship (G2G) and government to employees (G2E).

E-Governance Initiatives in India

India is not the first country which has seen the importance of e-governance for the effective delivery of public services. The government of India had declared year 2001 as "Year of E-Governance" to increase the usage of information technology in government. In 2002 the Prime Minister on the eve of Independence unveiled an ambitious program on e-governance. This proposal involved multiple issues: massive networking, making available all the services such as land records, registration of vehicles, municipalities and civil supplies

distribution, income tax, customs, issuance of passport, provident fund. Other proposal includes introduction of Policenet, edunet, e-employment, health net etc, Further the proposal aimed at assisting different states "on the pattern of Development and Reform Facility (DRF), and insist upon backward states for the massive computerisation in the area of man power information, taxation, land records, budgeting, commerce and agriculture and finally a database for government activities (Economic times, 2002). It was in 2003 that Indian government stressed on the need for comprehensive e-governance framework (Financial Express: 2003).

Indian government had approved a policy of earmarking two to three per cent of plan budget

for the purpose of information technology, or the purpose of introducing e-governance at different levels. Nonetheless the Indian government also established Centre for E-Governance under Department of Information technology. The principal aim of this centre is to "showcase successful tools and applications in e-governance and also serve as a venue for government officials, legislatures, industry and various other key players, to come together, discuss, learn and explore issues of shared importance" (http://egov.mit.gov.in/) . Its other activities include to demonstrate the best practices available in e-governance, create spaces for the policy makers including the feasibility of introducing e-governance, helps different governments to make policy changes etc,.

E-Governance Projects in Different States

States	Projects
Assam	ASHA, SANWAD
Andhra Pradesh	E-Seva, CARD, VOICE
Bihar	Sales tax administration management information
Chattisgarh	Treasury office E-linking Project
Delhi	Automatic Vehicle tracking System, Electronic Clearance System, Management Information System for Education
Goa	Dharani project
Gujarat	MahitiShakthi, Form Book Online, Census Online
Haryana	NaiDisha, Janani, SavidhaYojana
Himachal Pradesh	LokMitra
Karnataka	Bhoomi, Khajane, Kaveri
Kerala	E-Shrrinkhala, FRIENDS, PEARL, Asrya
Madhya Pradesh	Gyanadoot, Smart card in transport department, Gramasampark
Maharashtra	SETU, OnlneCompaint Management System
Rajasthan	Jan Mitra, Lokmitra, Rajnidhi, SARATHI
Tamil Nadu	Rasimaiyam, Application from related to Public utility, Universal Public Distribution System
Arunachal Pradesh	Community Information System
Manipur	Community Information System
Meghalaya	Community Information System
Mizoram	Community Information System
Nagaland	Community Information System
West Bengal	Gram Panchayat Accounts and Management, GIS based information system, citizen service, Center for Delivery of various services
Uttar Pradesh	Lokvani
Tripura	E-sevidhaKendras

e-Governance in Panchayat Raj System
India being the largest democracy in the world has much to gain from e-Governance especially when citizen participation in governance is of the features of the fully evolved stage of E Government.

Government of India has acknowledged widely for the past three decades that expended use of ICT in the Public sector can offer important benefits such as improved planning and monitoring mechanism, cost savings through rationalization and more effective administration and delivery of certain public services.

E Governance needs to transform all levels of government but the focus should be on Panchayat

Raj institutions, which are main interface with upper tiers of government.

The relationship of rural People and Panchayat Raj institution tends to be based on proximity as the interest at stake of both parties are closely intertwined concerning issues such as public services, rural development, rural health, education etc.

Thus E- Governance based on Administrative reforms operations in Panchayat Raj institutions can have maximum impact on rural citizens. At the national level the union government is active through many measures to implement E Governance in the Panchayati Raj system, while all

the state governments of the country have taken steps in their respective state. Every state government has created a separate website for Panchayati Raj department to implant E Governance in their state Panchayati Raj department and also designed and adopted much unique software to provide necessary services to the people, there by implementing the objectives of good governance by providing people friendly administration through the e- Governance .

" An effective Public Service Delivery mechanism leads to good governance and affects the life cycle of the citizens from womb to tomb "-e-Governance is an important way to provide people-friendly governance in Panchayat Raj system which is committed to this issue.

e-Panchayat Background

As per the World Bank, "E-Government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses , and other arms of government." Government of India (GoI), with an intention to transform the governance landscape by ensuring participation of citizens in policy making and providing ease of access to information to the citizens, introduced the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) in 2006. The vision of the NeGP was to "Make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality, through common service delivery outlets and ensure efficiency, transparency & reliability of such services at affordable costs to realise the basic needs of the common man." e-Panchayat is one of the Mission Mode Projects (MMP), currently being implemented with a vision to empower and transform rural India.

As a first step towards formulating the project, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj constituted an Expert Group in June, 2007 under the Chairmanship of Dr. B.K. Gairola, Director General, NIC, and Government of India. The Expert Group was entrusted with the task of assessing the IT Programmes of Ministry of Panchayati Raj and recommending cost effective solutions along with the cost implications. Adopting a consultative approach, the Committee interacted with the States/UTs to assess the existing status of computerization up to the Gram Panchayat level, including the initiatives undertaken by the State Governments. In order to understand the ground realities, the Committee conducted field visits to some of the Gram Panchayats in the selected rural areas where some IT initiatives had been undertaken. Inputs from eminent experts in the public and private sector were also taken into account as part of the consultative process. In essence, it found that while some computerization efforts had already been made at Panchayat level by States like Gujarat, West Bengal, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Goa, these attempts were limited as they were driven by short term goals and were unable to completely transform Panchayats due to lack of a holistic perspective. It was felt that a more comprehensive approach was required to make a cognizable impact on the functioning of the Panchayats for the benefit of the citizens. These recommendations formed the basis for the conceptualization of e-Panchayat MMP. The e-Panchayat project holds great promise for the rural masses as it aims to transform the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) into symbols of modernity, transparency and efficiency. This is a one of its kind nationwide IT initiative introduced by Ministry of Panchayati Raj that endeavours to ensure people's participation in programme decision making, implementation and delivery. The project aims to automate the functioning of the 2.45 lakh Panchayats in the country. The project addresses all aspects of Panchayat's functioning including Planning, Monitoring, Implementation, Budgeting, Accounting, Social Audit and delivery of citizen services like issue of certificates, licenses etc.

Objectives of e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project

If the Panchayats are to perform efficiently and effectively all the mandated tasks, which are increasing day by day, extensive use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is needed. Moreover, there is a strong need to build a "digital inclusive society" where large sections of rural population are able to benefit from new technologies; can access and share information and services freely and can participate in the development process more effectively.

The Panchayats being at the interface of rural citizens and governance structure are an effective vehicle to induce mass ICT culture at the grassroots level. It is with this broad vision that Ministry if Panchayat Raj formulated a scheme for ICT enablement of all the Panchayats in the country on a Mission Mode approach. The e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project (MMP) is intended to address all the aspects of Panchayat's functioning from internal core functions such as Decentralized Planning, Budgeting, Accounting, Implementation and monitoring etc. to service delivery like issue of certificates, licenses etc.

Hence the key objectives of e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project are to use ICT for:

❖   Automation of internal workflow processes of Panchayats

❖   Improving delivery of services to citizens

❖   Capacity building of Panchayat Representatives and Officials

❖   Social Audit

❖   Transparency, Accountability, Efficiency and RTI compliance of Panchayats

❖   Improving Governance of local self-government

The Panchayats being the basic unit for planning and implementation of a large number of schemes and services, this Mission Mode Project (MMP) would also go a long way in improving public service delivery through Panchayat Raj Institutions with better outcomes.

e-Governance and Ministry of Panchayat raj

The ministry of Panchayat Raj is a branch of the government of India looking after the ongoing process of decentralization and local governance in the states ministry of Panchayat Raj looks into all matters relating to the Panchayati Raj and Panchayati Raj institutions. It was created in May 2004. The ministry is headed by a minister of cabinet rank.

To realize the concept of good governance the ministry has given a lot of priority to e-governance and has taken many steps in this regard, as part of this, ministry was its own website the website is very well designed, many links are available on this website through these links it is possible to get information as regard and connect directly to other complementary websites related to the Panchayat Raj system Contains brief information about ministry of Panchayat Raj, organizational structure of the ministry contact point for redressal of Public grievances through ministry and information of concerned authorities. Finance Commission is another link on this website which includes the report given by the finance commission in relation to Rural Local Bodies, Ministry of finance's operational guidelines for the relationship between the finance commission and the Panchayat Raj Ministry.

Also on this website there is another link called 'PESA'. In which complete information related to Panchayat Extension to scheduled Areas (PESA ACT 1996) can be accessed through this link there is another link called PRI. PRI means Panchayat Raj institution which includes Constitutional Provisions related to Panchayat Raj institutions conference report, statistics of PRIs under Panchayat Raj institutions by state and union territory representation of women in Panchayat Raj institution etc. Sub links of elements will be opened.

There is another one link called RGSA (Rastriya Grama Swaraj abhiyan) which members the complete details of RGSA programme, traning material people's plan campaign ministry of Panchayat Raj institution. After this there is another one link SDG (Sustainable development Goals) which includes AKAM – Iconic week, write – shop programme, LSDG Logo, BPDP and DPDP workshop. After this, there is another link e-governance, This link is very inpertent in the website because this is a direct way to connect with Grama Swaraj, Swamithwa, Audit outline, LGD (Local Government directory) this is a very useful link for common people.

After this link there is another link awards link this link includes revamped awards, scheme Guidelines, Questionnaires for awards, list of award Panchayats and achievement, miscellaneous, national write shop on revamped awards.

After this there is another link Research Study this link includes Background and scheme guidelines, themes identified during 2021-22 and 2022-23 and copies of study report.

After this there is another link Parliament and Coordination this link includes parliament and co-ordination this link includes parliament Questions, matters raised under article 377, report of the parliamentary committees monthly important activities special mention, special campaign.

After this there is another one link this links methods National Panchayat Raj day special media links YouTube links, Gramoday Sankalp, National Panchayati Raj day, Yoga day.

After this there is another link (IFD) This link includes general financial rules 2017, Guidelines institutions tender document, government e-market place (GEM) and vigilance manual, After this there is another one link official language this link includes Rajya Bhasha Adhiniyam, Hindi Pakwadha, Parliamentary committee on official language, Hindi Salakaar Samitti, official language workshop, training on official language for quick translation status of officials on knowledge of Hindi as per Rajyabhasha Adhuniyam.

After this link there is another link Best practices this link has complete information about the best practices followed by the Panchayats and the awards given to them

Along with all these links there is another one more link that links best practices regarding e-Gramaswaraj LGD (Local Government directory),

SWAMITHVA, GPDP (Grama Panchayat Development), AUDIT online, Grama Manchitra, Vibrant Grama Sabha Service Plus, Panchayat charter there (VGS) are supplementary links to provide complete information about them by providing direct connection with them.

Thus, the Ministry of Panchayat Raj includes a website containing comprehensive information on the entire Panchayat Raj System and its functioning. Overall, this website of ministry of Panchayat Raj is reflection of the adherence to the principle of transparency of the Panchayat Raj System and also this website of Ministry of Panchayat Raj.

II.   Conclusion

A pro-people administration that is aware of the needs of such people and acts with sensitivity will contribute to the development of the country.

The needs of the people are increasing according to the changing situations, the good governance only is able to fulfil the increasing demands in the changing situation as quickly as possible, such a governance is necessary for present and future well-being.

In this view the role of Panchayat Raj institutions are very important. India has constitutionally established panchayat Raj institutions in order to implement the Good Governance.

Panchayat Raj institutions are an image form of decentralized administration system. There is several necessary actions being taken in order to achieve the purpose of decentralization.

The idea of e-governance and people friendly administration is intimately connected. e-governance is a powerful tool for Panchayat Raj System to bring Efficiency, Effectiveness and Economy in administrative system. The e-governance acts as a delivery of services in transparent manner at all the levels of the government and at all time. Panchayat Raj Institutions are providing people oriented governance by taking several initiatives related to e-governance.

Thus, the e-governance initiatives implemented for better governance in Panchayat Raj institutions are a great development in the governance of the country, which directly and indirectly contribute to the progress of the citizens and the country, so it is necessary to take more e-governance initiatives.

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