

# Ethical Challenges In E-Governance For Transforming India

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## ABSTRACT

The Present era is the Digital era in which things are converting in technological tools and products. Even human beings' identity is existing in the form of some information like SIM card, ATM /debit card, PAN number, etc. These transformations are the result of the technological advancement of the Country through Information technology revolutions. Administration, the implementing machinery of government, is now also well equipped with this electronic development in e-governance, which is the outcome of the IT boom in India. Technological advancement of various nations of rest of world is propelling our governance system towards – e-government, e-administration. However, it is excellent and effective to maintain effectiveness, easiness, and transparency in the administration's day-to-day functioning up to some extent. But unfortunately, it is assumed that e-governance is the solution to all problems related to administrative functions which are not true in the present environment. The government and media are propagating it as the key to all success, but it is quite different from above. This form of governance is also facing various such challenges, which might create problems if not dealt with within time. Simply deciding to implement new technology because it makes our life easier may not be the best choice. My life may be easier but how does this affect my neighbors or the environment or even my grandchildren's lives. We have both an ethical and moral responsibility to ourselves, society, and the environment. When we are faced with technical decisions we need to learn all we can about the issue, analyze the issue from both a technical and ethical viewpoint, and then choose a course of action that best satisfies both even if that means not using the available technology. We must always remember that our choices will create change and we need to consider that possibility in all we do. Ethics and technology are becoming different aspects of the same function. One cannot consider one without considering the effects of the other. This paper focuses on the limitations of e-governance in the context of ethics in India. The paper aims to identify ethical challenges before the e-governance which might be disturbing for the intention and motive of e-governance and provide some solutions in form of suggestions for developing technology(e-governance) for human welfare in an ethical context.

**Keywords:** Democracy, Digital Divide, Ethical challenges, E-Governance, Information and Communication Technology, SMART.

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## INTRODUCTION

Good governance is an ever-eternal challenge to rulers themselves since the emergence of the state.[1] In its all form and nature, good governance is deeply associated with efficient, effective and easy government. People, the foremost element of any form of government, must be benefited through policies, programs, and schemes of government-operated by its employed administrators. But the awareness and efficiency at both sides (i.e. the administrators and the users) must be necessary for the achievement of the goal for good governance. The concept of e-governance is of the recent origin of which has

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brought about a paradigm shift in the use of information technology (IT) for administrative applications to maintain good governance. E-governance is a multidimensional concept, which comprises the use

of IT-driven methodology to improve the efficiency of administration, maintain transparency, and leads to the reduction of costs.[2] the perspective of e-governance is "the use of the technologies that both help to govern and have to be governed."

**Ethical issues in Technology**

We can see from the information presented that the relationship between ethics and technology is becoming more and more prevalent. Technology brings change and with that change, it brings possible conflicts that are often ethical. We can say that technology's ethical decisions are becoming a major concern for technologists, society, and the environment. The decisions we make will always have consequences. Those consequences will have an impact, either positive or negative.

We must be prepared to consider the impact that our choices will make. This impact is not limited to today or tomorrow or even next year. This impact will incite change forever. Due to this, we must anticipate the results of our actions with ethical considerations in mind. Technology is a tool for change and that change is forever. Thus we must diligent in our analysis of emerging technologies to ensure that we make the right decisions both from a technical standpoint as well as an ethical standpoint.

**Key principles of Ethics in E-governance**

- Equality of citizens in the e-governance Services.
- The legality of decisions.
- Service continuity.
- Proximity and accessibility to the services.
- Participation in the process of decision-making.
- Quality and efficiency in the provision of services.
- Transparency in management and information.
- Evaluation of services.
- The rapidity of responses.
- Confidentiality and respect of the private life.

**IT interventions for Good Governance**

World Bank defines e-government as the "...use of Information and Communication Technologies by government agencies to transform relations with citizens, business and other arms of the government." It involves Information Technology initiatives that are used for improving –

1. the Interaction between Government and citizen's or Government and Business, i.e., E-service
2. the internal governmental operations, i.e., E-administration; and

3. external interaction, i.e.E-society[3]

In other words, e-governance(short for electronic government, also known as e-gov, digital government, online government, or connected government) means an application of an electronic form to the interaction between:

1. government (G) and citizens (C) ,both ways (i.e. G2C and C2G),
2. government or business (B), both ways (i.e., G2B and B2G), and
3. internal government operations (G2G)[4]

E-governance implies e-democracy (Backers 2001), wherein all forms of interaction between the electorate (i.e.,the general public) and the elected (i.e., the government) are performed electronically. Various manifestations of e-governance initiative will be in terms of delivering services to citizens of transacting

**IT implementations**

<i>Ethical issues</i>	<i>e-Governance implementation</i>
Equality of citizens in the eyes of Public Service.	Digitalization of the relationships between the administration and its users.
The legality of decisions, Continuity of service.	On line application standardization of procedures, portals and legal sites.
Proximity and accessibility to the services.	Permanent online access to the provisions of the administration.
Participation in the process of decisions making.	Automation of transactions eliminates interface conflicts and personal relationships as well as interest conflicts.
Quality and efficiency in the provision of services.	Cost, distance, and time are considerably reduced, elimination of intermediates, clientilism and favoritism.
Transparency in management and information.	On line quest, forums, Automation of transactions eliminates interface conflicts and personal relationships as well as interest conflicts.
Evaluation of services, Rapidity in time response, Confidentiality and respect of private life.	A new organization of Services.
Higher control, in the mail, follow up, meeting, and in projects advancement capacity.	Traceable responsibilities.



business offering general information or conducting interactions with the general public and business using such IT tools as:

- e-mail
- Internet websites publishing
- Intranet development and usage
- Promotion of citizen access.[5]

## E-GOVERNANCE—AN INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

Today, the government has to focus on providing efficient and effective service to its people. Much aware environment now plays an important role in the delivery of services. In India, the concept of e-governance has more to do with facilitation rather than regulation. The fundamental motivation for the campaign of e-governance in India is a slogan –to provide a 'SMART' government.

SMART is an acronym for Simple, Moral, Accountable, and Responsive government.[6] The last decade is a witness of emerging India as an IT superpower. The 1991 World Bank survey gave India 26 points and Ireland 27 points for IT capability. After ten years, another study by NASSCOM-Mckinsey placed India ahead of Ireland in the same edition of the survey in terms of vendor and people satisfaction. Although India is an IT superpower, it doesn't minimize the importance of good governance for achieving development objectives. As far as India is concerned, both the central and state governments haven't made sure that governmental service delivery is systematic and well equipped with IT and its components. When we try to establish the correlation between government and technology, we can see the dichotomy between these two as follows-

<i>Government System</i>	<i>Technology</i>
Regulated	Creative
Hierarchical	Non-hierarchical
Static	Dynamic

So the question is how to correlate the system of government with technology. We all know that a democratic government is one which is of the people, by the people, and for the people. For better e-governance, this theorem shall also follow in its true sense, but e-governance in India doesn't fulfill all three criteria. These things can be understood by the following example-

### For the People

1. *Low Literacy*: In India, where only the ability to write own name is the criteria to declare a citizen as literate

brings a literacy rate near 65% of the total population. The situation is much severe in the case of the rural population. In light of the above figures, we can imagine the status of e-literacy in India again we can think of the rate of e-literacy in the rural part of India where real India resides. When we are looking for modernization and electronically equipped of our administration system, we have to consider about those people as well who are not in a position to read and write properly and since they are also a vital part of our social system, no administration can succeed by ignoring the interest of such class. It will affect the democratic shape of our country in which every person has equal right to develop themselves.

2. *Awareness*: Change is the law of nature and every positive thing, which is coming from any change, shall always be welcomed and it is the duty of concerning people to adopt it positively. On the other hand, it is also the responsibility of administrators/ implementers to convey these changes to the people by creating awareness among them and promoting the efficient use of the available services.

In the case of e-governance, it has been seen that there is a lack of awareness regarding IT-enabled services in India. One more thing that is very important and observed by researchers is that not only common people but also the concerned person who owned the responsibility to implement e-governance are also unaware of their proper use. Especially personnel of lower and middle level of administration don't know much about the technicality of e-governance. It is the responsibility of the government or administration and the duty of people to be aware of the fast-changing technical world. The possibility of success will be doubtful until each element of society contributes to this.

3. *Admissibility of documents before the various concerning departments*: There are few cases in which the concerning parties have denied to accept the documents which were taken by SAHEJ center (Kiosk established for providing such facilities through the computer system. (Allahabad case)
4. *Language (Regional)*: There are 28 states and 7 union territories in India. Each state has several regional languages, and people who reside in rural areas are akin to using a known regional language. Illiteracy also plays a crucial role infrequent use of these languages. In the case of e-governance, it is one of the major challenges that software that is used in its operations is in the English language. Most rural people are not capable of reading or writing this

language even most people cannot understand it. So it is a major challenge before administration to provide delivery of service in that language that is user-friendly for those people who are unable to establish communication by using such language.

5. *Digital divide (Cyber etiquette and its Security awareness)*: There is a big gap of a digital divide in India i.e., one who knows about availing the technology and others who do not about the availing technology. So it is the big challenge of governance to bridge the gap. It is a matter to know the people about the technology and it is a matter to teach them about its etiquettes and its security. So that the people couldn't be the victim, security in terms of physical security, confidentiality, integrity, and availability must achieve.

### By the People

1. *Lack of co-ordination among various departments*: Administration works with a holistic approach. It means that many a time a single work can be completed by more than a single department; in that case, proper and efficient co-ordination is essential to provide delivery of service efficiently with transparency and then accountability of any task can determine. But unfortunately, it has been seen in some cases of e-governance that there is improper co-ordination among departments in their day-to-day operations. This a major challenge before because improper co-ordination will delay such type of tasks and ultimately the motive of e-governance, efficiently maintain transparency and effectiveness, will be forgone.
2. Lack of transparency and existence of red-tapism
3. The inefficiency of administrator and subsidiary agencies
4. A paradigm shift cannot be visualized by just framing policies

For more than a century, we follow the traditional administration pattern initiated by British rulers; now we are habitual for this type of administration. People, Political representatives, Administrators; all have a mindset to perform in such a scenario. With the evolution of the ICT revolution, e-governance has entered into the functioning of administration to make administration more effective, speedy, and transparent which is the core of any form of governance. But one very important thing we should keep in our mind that e-governance is not just the use of hardware and system for the delivery of service by the administration but it

also includes the development of the mindset of people. It also requires development, certain changes in the mind of administrators as well as citizens. Because we all know the rationality of any form of administration will exist, only it will be received by concerning people in that manner that is assumed or determined by the administrator.

### Vendor Driven System

Presently the e-governance projects, launched by Central and various state governments, are operated by vendors. By e-governance, we are replacing manual clerical system to e-clerical system, and which is not an internal part of the government. So we are creating a new class of ruler whose are equipped with technical know-how. In India, the various states have different vendors for this. The standard of service and software is also different in an other state, which causes lack of uniformity among various e-governance projects running in various states. It will mark the question of doubt on standardization of work.

### Mindset is Not Developed According to the Technological Evolution

India holds the democratic setup of government and there is three main part of government - Legislature, Administration, and Judiciary. When we go through the traditional administrative system features, we found that the traditional administrative system is suffering from various evils that might be part of our traditional system, which is the existence of British legacy. But technology contains quite different nature, it moves faster than our administrative system. To make it clearer, we can take the example of our country's law-making process, which is very time-consuming and very slow. This might be bearable in the case of traditional administrative setup which was based on manual operations but when we are looking towards SMART government and for this, we are using technology frequently than this old and outdated system will spoil the basic intention and motive behind the e-governance. If we are looking for an efficient government to effectively deliver service and cost-effectively, we have to consider those factors, which may create some challenges before administrator and administration.

### Suggestions to Improve E-governance-

After analyzing the above challenge in brief researcher finds that by adopting some measures/steps we can make our e-governance system much secure and vulnerability proof and user friendly also-





1. Creation of awareness among all concerning parties like People, Political representatives, and Administrators
2. Proper propagation of e-governance programs
3. Establishment of co-ordination among all related departments/concerning departments
4. Development of software in regional languages also
5. Proper and time-bound training to administrators and municipal personnel's
6. Maintain transparency by action
7. Uniformity of service provided by vendors
8. Creation of e-literacy by organizing various programs/workshops
9. Introduce cyberethics as a subject at UG level course
10. Cooperation of media
11. Creation of e-environment – To Make capable to govt. officials, especially to a non-technical person
12. Introduce various legal courses to deal with legal issues that arise due to the complexity of e-governance
13. Adoption of security measures to ensure that the e-governance process is secure from theft and cybercrime.
14. Time-bound policy to develop own set up to reduce the dependability on vendors
15. More Use of ICT in various departments
16. E-governance is for the betterment of common people not only for vendors it has to explain by the implementer of e-government.
17. Right to information also provided through online access
18. Expand the area of e-governance by including more services in it, providing Income certificates, etc.
19. Make sure that the confidentiality and authenticity of the document, Data must be there in delivery of service through e-governance it will make e-governance much secure and acceptable.
20. The regulatory body for regular monitoring and vigilance.

While e-government is often thought of as "online government" or "Internet-based government," many non-Internet "electronic government" technologies can be used in this context. Some non-Internet forms include telephone, fax, PDA, SMS text messaging, MMS, wireless networks and services, Bluetooth, CCTV, tracking systems, RFID, biometric identification, road traffic management and regulatory enforcement, identity cards, smart cards, and other Near Field Communication applications; polling station technology (where non-online e-voting is being considered), TV and radio-based

delivery of government services (e.g., CSMW), email, online community facilities, newsgroups and electronic mailing lists, online chat, and instant messaging technologies are also used to provide government-related information and services to the citizens.

India has to go a long way in establishing a proper e-governance framework in terms of governing laws, the Constitution of governing bodies, authorities, and physical structure. With these suggestions, it is hoped that India will certainly improve its quality of rendering services through electronic mode to make it accessible and convenient for every person in due course.

## CONCLUSION

By testing e-governance on the above parameters, researchers have found that the findings are negative and e-governance is not going to solve its purpose properly. Although some state governments and the central government are performing well as far as e-governance is concerned and they are nursing and providing strength to this new and efficient form of government but this represents a small share of the country and the rest of the country is living in the inherent dichotomy of INDIA and BHARAT which we understand as a 'Digital divide.'

India represents those states and people who are well educated with good financial and sound mental ability to enjoy this technological development easily, but the status of various state and its citizen is not as good as in case of a developed state. But these poor states represent more than the two-thirds population of a country. So what about those people inside the bag of e-governance? States where the facilities of livelihood things are very poor and after more than half-century of our independence, people are still spending their lives in miserable conditions even though they don't know about their right (provided by Constitution and various other laws of India).

We have seen that e-governance in India is not for the people and by the people so we can easily imagine that it is also not of the people means it doesn't fulfill any criteria of the democratic form of governance. Improper planning, Lack of co-ordination, unawareness of people, and doubtful intentions of administration are the root cause for the slow expansion/growth of e-governance. Thus from the above discussions, we conclude that for successful implementation Standards of e-governance in infrastructure, legislations, strategy all need to be in place by implementing the IT infrastructure with ethical issues. It also requires the

establishment of various institutions under the Ministry of Information Technology. It requires a Global Vision and local implementation. And above all, it requires e-readiness in the minds of citizens of India and the Government employees. The paper will be incomplete without giving a direction to our strategy and this direction comes in the words of Mahatma Gandhi

"...Whether what we are doing benefits the common man in anyway..."

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