**Class Note**

**4TH SEMESTER 2020 (M.Sc. Anthropology)**

Course Code: ANT 404B

Course Name: Emerging Areas in Socio-cultural Anthropology

Topic: E-governance(31.8)

Teacher – Dr. Sumahan Bandyopadhyay

E-governance is the application of electronic means via Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the government work and service delivery to the people.

According to Bagga et al., “e-governance is government-to-people and people-to-government connections whereby citizens obtain direct access to records, rules and information about entitlements that they need or want in their daily lives… It also runs into strong resistance since disintermediation methods eliminate middlemen and others whose livelihoods and incomes depend upon the relative inaccessibility of government documents.”

E-Government can be defined as “the major initiatives of management and delivery of information and public services taken by all levels of government […] on behalf of citizens, business, involving using multi-ways of internet, website, system integration, and interoperability, to enhance the services (information, communication, policy making), quality and security, and as a new key (main, important) strategy or approach.” [C.f.Toni,2014.]

It is said that the e-governance has the following merits-

1. Speed
2. Cost Reduction
3. Transparency
4. Accountability
5. Convenience
6. Improved Customer Service
7. Increased Access to Information

The disadvantage of the e-governance is the problem of implementation of the different programmes in a country with a huge number of illiterate people and poor economic conditions of a large number of people. The major hindrances of the problem can be understood through ‘Digital Divide’.

The penetration of and access to ICTs is higher in developed countries than in developing countries like India. Given this situation there is the question of how e-governance can cater to the vast population of India that does not have regular access to ICTs such as computers and the Internet. Information and communication technology expenditures16 by country in 2003-2008 as a percentage of GDP show that India (4.5%), Pakistan (4.4%) and Sri Lanka (4.3%) have similar levels of expenditures on ICTs. Of the countries in the region, Bangladesh is an outlier with 9.0%.

Table below shows the some of the countries with numbers of Internet users in 2009. It can be observed that the top 20 countries account for 76% of the world Internet users while the rest of world accounts for only 24% of Internet users. In South Asia only 21% of the population uses the Internet. 20 In India only 7% of the billion-plus population uses the Internet, accounting for a miniscule 4.7% of the world’s Internet users. The potential impact of Internet usage suggests that the utilization of e-governance services will be influenced by access to and use of the Internet.

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| **Rank** | **Country or Region** | **Population**  **(million)** | **Internet users**  **(million)** | **Penetration**  **(% of**  **Popu.)** | **Growth of Internet users**  **2000-2009** | **Share of world users (%)** |
| 1 | China | 1,339 | 360 | 26.9 | 1,500.0 | 20.8 |
| 2 | United States | 307 | 228 | 74.1 | 138.8 | 13.1 |
| 3 | Japan | 127 | 96 | 75.5 | 103.9 | 5.5 |
| 4 | India | 1,157 | 81 | 7.0 | 1520.0 | 4.7 |
| 5 | Brazil | 199 | 68 | 34.01 | 250.2 | 3.9 |

**E-governance in India: An Overview**

In the 1990s India began to apply several communication technology initiatives such as e-governance, telecommunication, tele-medicine, e-commerce, and community information centers while promoting access to the Internet to bring economic benefits to the people. However, the development of ICT infrastructure, can well be traced to the setting of National Informatics Centre (NIC) in 1976. The next stepping stone was the building up of NICNET satellite based infrastructure in 1987. The enabled the development of District Information System (DIC) of the NIC. The idea behind the e-governance was to ensure ICT based service in the following mode:

i.G2G – Government to Government Services

ii. G2C - Government to Citizen Services

iii. G2B - Government to Business Services

iv.G2E- Government to Employee Services

The applications of ICTs for e-governance in rural development can be classified in the following way:

1) provide decision support to public administrators for improving planning and monitoring of developmental programs;

2) improve service to citizens and enable transparency;

3) empower citizens through access to information and knowledge; and

4) train developmental organizations to improve their functions and expand employment opportunities in rural areas.

India’s experience in e-governance/ICT initiatives has demonstrated significant success in improving accessibility, cutting down costs, reducing corruption, and increasing access to unserved groups.

Most of the state governments in India have approved e-governance initiatives through the use of ICTs and are in the process of enabling their citizens to use the Internet too. E-governance is viewed as ICT-enabled governance.

The National E-governance Plan (NeGP) is a comprehensive program of the Government of India and is designed to leverage capabilities and opportunities presented by ICT to promote good governance across the country. It was launched in 2006 after being formulated by Department of Electronics and Information Technology and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances of Government of India. The vision of the NeGP is to “make all Government services accessible to the common man in his locality.”10 E-governance is seen as a vehicle to initiate and sustain reforms by focusing on three broad areas:

**Governance:** Transparency; people’s participation; promotion of a democratic society.

**Public services:** Efficient, cost-effective and responsive governance; convenient services to citizens

and businesses; greater citizen access to public information; accountability in delivery of services to citizens.

**Management:** Simplicity, efficiency and accountability; managing voluminous information and data effectively; information services; swift and secure communication.

The NeGP includes 26 Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) and 8 support components to be implemented at the central, state, and local government levels. The plan attempts to cover all the important areas relating to e-governance – policy, infrastructure, finances, project management, government process re-engineering, capacity building, training, assessment, and awareness (among others) across the central and state governments.

The development of Common Service Centre (CSC) is another important milestone in the history of e-governance in India. It was launched as a part of the NeGP in 2006.It was launched in order to foster effective linkage between government and common people. The objectives of the programme were as the following:

1. Access to information
2. Delivery of public services
3. Use of ICT for rural empowerment and inclusion
4. Quality education for the people.
5. Health service delivery
6. Catalyst for economic growth and rural entrepreneurship.

In the numerous villages of the country , CSCs were set up in private – public partnership. The rural people used to visits these set ups for different services.

The ‘Digital India’ mission was launched by Government of India in 2015.It has a vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. Digital India mission held the digital infrastructure as a core a utility to every citizen in the country. Under this programme, several services have been brought over a common platform.

**Example: Case Study of Kerala**

The state of Kerala presents an interesting case in the study of e-governance in a region with high literacy and educational status, access to ICTs, civic engagement, and political participation as compared to other states in India. Kerala is in the forefront of implementing e-governance and m-governance. It is also the only state to implement the Akshaya e-literacy project towards facilitating capacity-building for citizens to participate in modernizing governance and implementing an effective plan to bridge the digital divide.

In India, Kerala ranks first among states in literacy, human development, infrastructure development, and quality of life. Kerala citizens have high exposure to mass media and demonstrate high levels of political participation. The state of Kerala is also in the forefront of implementing e-governance initiatives. These factors make Kerala an ideal setting to study people’s participation in e-governance. The Union Ministry for Information Technology identified the Palghat and Kannur districts of Kerala for implementing the people-friendly e-District project as part of the NeGP. This section of the article uses the case study method with the interpretative research approach in which the phases of data gathering and data analysis comingle, as data analysis often leads to a new round of data gathering. The data are drawn from primary statistics, existing literature and publications on e-governance in Kerala, and in-depth interviews to gather information from ten entrepreneurs who run the Akshaya Centres.

**Reading/Refs.**

1.E-Governance Policy for Modernizing Government through Digital Democracy in India

-Kiran Prasad, *Journal of Information Policy*, Vol. 2 (2012), pp. 183-203

2. e-Democracy: Exploring the Current Stage of e-Government -Toni G.L.A. van der Meer, Dave Gelders and Sabine Rotthier; *Journal of Information Policy*, Vol. 4 (2014), pp. 489-506