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# Ethics and E-Governance: Social Change in the post Covid-19 Pandemic in India

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## Abstract

Ethics and E Governance can use the term interconnecting in present day scenario having with significant contribution and challenges in present day development administration. So, all governments have needed to prescribe a code of conduct for all ministers and civil servants with a method of detailed information of instructions containing 'dos and don'ts'. Ethics and E Governance has different dimension comprising Control of corruption, bridge digital divide, business data security, facilities learning processes and information and removes regional disparities. It's great to fact that e-Governance can streamline processes, improve transparency and enhance accessibility for citizens of India and abroad. It's a positive step towards a more efficient and digital empowered India. However digital divide, lack of awareness, data security and privacy concern, technological infrastructure, capacity building and corruption are simultaneously working challenges from the stakeholders to promote accountability in e-governance practices.

## Introduction

The term "ethics" is derived from the Greek word "ethos" which implies to character, guiding beliefs, ideals that pervade a group, a community or people. Ethics is a standard set of behaviour, choices and action governed by value system in the society comprising rights, obligations, fairness, virtues, morality etc. Accountability and responsibility are fundamental part of ethics based on moral character, rules, sense of right and wrong. Again, in the role of institutions and institutional frameworks to ensure ethical governance cannot be perceived. Ethics in Governance the Second Administrative Reforms Commission in its Report suggested the principles for values serve, respect, sense of right and wrong, integrity, financial honesty, public office should be treated accountable to society, neutrality and impartiality etc. 'Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive and Transparent' (SMART) Governance is the order of the day to carry effective and efficient governance. Since the government of India as well as the state governments has prescribed a code of conduct to all ministers and the Code of Conduct for the Civil Servants (CCS) has developed gradually over time, with a set of detailed information of instructions containing 'dos and don'ts' in 1930s called 'Conduct Rules'. The Santhanam Committee, CCS Conduct Rules 1964 is being followed today. These rules are considered as a dynamic set of instructions for the government servants based on legal framework. However, in today's world civil servant and the governments in collective form are playing race less role in socio-economic development of the country.

## Objectives

During and after the COVID-19 pandemic, the study objectives of ethics and e-governance are significant as they aim to address the challenges and opportunities brought about by the crisis. Some of the key objectives of the piece of study are:
1. To understand about the conceptual understanding between ethics and e-governance in administration.
2. To investigating implementation of e-governance and accountability concern in public sector administration, and
3. To assessing and examining the challenges on social change sustainable and inclusive e-governance during post Covid-19 pandemic.

## Methodology

In this article I would like to select methodology such as observation and interview; study materials like journal, article, newspaper published and official record to understand how e-governance practices have evolved during and after pandemic and their ethical implication.

**Review of Literature**
Butta Raman, E-Governance possibilities in India for post-Covid-19 era (2020) [2], states on every time the government uses an e-governance technology, it result in more efficiency, lesser costs, lesser manpower requirement and lesser physical presence of humans in the job at hand. Meenakshi Gupta, Probity in Governance (August 2021) [5], expressed that conflict of interest is to be avoided in all circumstances at all times and under no circumstances, the official position should be used for private purposes. He again emphasized on some notable inclusions are the requirement of observing courtesy, prohibiting demanding and accepting dowry, prohibiting sexual harassment of women employees etc. A Handbook of E-Governance in India, Dr. M. Smathy, 2020, India is a young country having nearly 65% of the population below 35 years of age and has explained to promote good governance India has recognized the urgent need for administrative reforms to enhance the capacity and capability of administrative systems in carrying out goals for economic and social development. Nagaraja K. E-Governance in India: Issues and Challenges (2016), explained as E-governance has had great role in each sphere of the economy over of years. India economy has been progressive one on account of good governance conventionally, govt. used to struggle to provide services to its citizens before initiatives of e-governance.

**Discussion**
Some ethical considerations and linkages of Ethical e-Governance in present time indicate are as following five key dimensions:

- Control corruption
- Bridges digital divide
- Ensures data security
- Facilitates learning processes and information
- Removes regional disparities

E-Governance is the strongest strategy to prevent corruption as established in the Global Corruption Report survey in 2003. By deepening internet penetration to the farthest corner of the country most regional disparities start fading. This refers to achieving 'access', 'affordability' and 'speed' in 'last mile delivery'. Bridges the 'digital divide' amongst communities, regions and nations and focus upon technology systems which respective requirements of gender, disability, caste, class, religion, race, language or boundary. People and government expect their data to remain secure if they were to use e-services. However, hacking of the most protected government websites has taken place and data stolen and misuse. Facilitates learning of processes and information helps administrators to scientifically approach and improve indices of e-governance which move towards holistic and inclusive development through scientifically established targets. According to 'Digital in 2017' report by Hootsuite, social media management platform demonstrates that India's internet penetration rate is only 35% in comparison to 50% of global internet penetration rate.
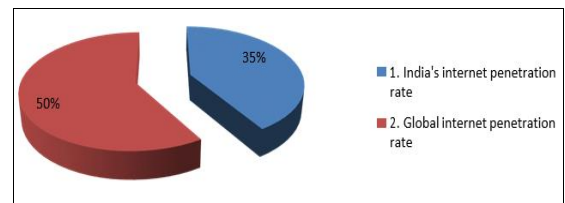


**Fig 1:** 'Digital in 2017' Report and India's internet penetration rate

E-Government now became an unavoidable evolution in the present day modern successful governance. The modern governments and Covid-19 pandemic in specific the service provider, Information and Communication Technology are required to meet the demands of the citizens. According to Gartner, e-Governance means I. Information II. Interaction III. Transaction and IV. Transformation. Since 1970s India a largest democracy in the world for the first time started adopting e-governance to change quickly, progressed towards good governance policy. The aims of e-Governance to make the interaction between government and citizens (G2C), government and business enterprises (G2B) convenient, transparent, friendly effective and cost-effective. The Government of India started various endeavors to successfully implement the E-Governance initiative; however, many complexities exist due to the inter-operability among central, state, district and local governments. According to a survey report of the United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs (UNDESA), 2020 India was placed 100 in the E-Governance Development Index. In 2014 was placed 118, in 2016 was 107 rank; in 2018 she acquired 96 rank. In connecting to the e-participation, in the year 2020, India bagged 29 position, wherein in 2018, she acquired 15 position.
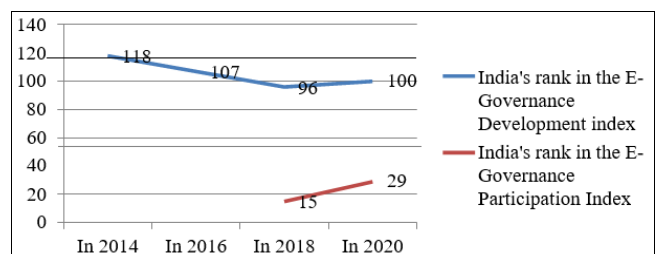


**Fig 2:** India's rank in E-Governance Development & Participation Index (UNDESA-2020)

To succeed in dealing with the challenges for example inter-operability, infrastructural challenges, digital divide and Covid-19 pandemic, etc. India is now trying to bridge the gap between urban and rural e-governance structure and taking all new initiatives to develop overall effectiveness of service delivery mechanism. Few major infrastructure components of e- governance initiatives of the Government of India are State Data Centers (SDCs), State Wide Area Networks (SWAN), Common Service Centers (CSCs) etc. Again 'Aadhaar', biometric Identification brought the revolution to e-governance. Various schemes for example

Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act. (MGNREGA), and many others sectors for example conduct online classes and examinations, transactions of payments, e-FIR, e-passports and visa; and many more poverty alleviation and welfare delivery schemes are implementing by the government of India.

In the year of 2015, the Digital India Initiative was launched to bridge the gap between urban and rural areas. It is also designed as an Umbrella program which covers multiple Government and Departments. The aims of Digital India program is to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy highlighting on following key visions:

- Digital infrastructure as a core utility to every citizen of India.
- Governance and Services on demand of the citizen, and
- Digital empowerment of the citizens.

During Covid-19 pandemic, e-governance formed into a series the central role as necessary element for communication, leadership, administration, social services, sharing knowledge etc. ICT and e-governance became key tool for circulate Covid-19 connected data for example-lockdown guidelines, travel guidelines health related assistance, in a more transparent, safe and secure manner. Aarogya Setu App, Co-win App etc. and identify infected cases numbers, recovery result, e-Doctor, tele-video and Vaccination information are easily manageable through the e-Governance.

## Conclusion

The e-Governance scope projects expended at an unexpected speed during Covid-19 pandemic by adding many innovative e-infrastructure. The first significant challenge ahead of Indians largest database in the post-Covid scenario is assuring a secure, effective, transparent and reliable system that is restore friendly relations with the basic fundamental rights and values guaranteed in the Constitution of India. The second challenge in e-Governance is to adopt new methods to decrease the digital divides and to promote inclusive e-governance for achieving the promise, 'to leave nobody behind'.

The post-Covid government should therefore, required to be develop effective e- governance through:

- Exchange and make information of e-governance infrastructure between intra- governmental departments and agencies.
- Inclusive development of e-governance structure.
- Legitimize effective data security and protection and administrative regulations.
- Reducing digital divide by inclusive e-literacy.
- Welcome New Age Technologies (NAT) for more improved integrated service delivery.

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