E-Governance: The Role and Functioning in the State of Haryana

Himanshi Malik
Ph.D Research Scholar, Department Of Political Science
Panjab University, Chandigarh

Abstract

This paper tends to review the initiatives taken by the government by incorporating ICT in service delivery. India is a country where most of the people live in villages and there is a rural-urban divide in terms of growth, development, services, infrastructure etc. India has witnessed a great boom of the internet which not only technologically but also politically, economically and socially influenced the life of people. With the boom of the internet, the government has taken initiative to ensure governance at the door step in the form of e-governance. The World Bank (2007) has defined e-Governance as the usage of the information technologies which mainly includes Internet, Mobile and Wide Area Networks by the government which as a result transformed the relations between the citizens and the government and liquified the flow of service and information delivery (Beniwal; Sikka, 2017). The Internet has played a great role whether it is communication, education, information, media, entertainment or service delivery which has transformed the physical rural-urban divide into digital divide. Government has taken many initiatives by providing internet enabled services to bridge the gap between rural and urban areas. This paper argues that where does the vision of digital India stand in a country which is plagued with poverty, illiteracy and low growth rate especially in rural areas by critically looking at working of e-governance and e-panchayats like initiatives taken by the government in the state of Haryana with the aim to provides services at the door steps. This paper also seeks to look at how much the new media and new ways of communication are being able to influence the lives of people living especially in rural areas.

Introduction

From the last two decades, the world has been witnessing a process of structural transformation which is linked with the new technological patterns revolving around information and communication technology (Cardoso, 2005, pp.12). India is not an exception as according to TRAI (Telecom Regulatory Authority of India) reports of 2015 India has arrived at the door steps of new media with approximately 996 million mobiles, second only to China. In the last decade India witnessed a tremendous increase in the internet penetration, making the people socially and politically aware which is evident from the fact that there had been a great increase in the participation, contestation and representation in electoral politics which leads to the deepening of democracy. As per the Internet Live Stats report, the internet penetration during 2004 was just 2% and in 2016 it went to 34.8%. The growth of new media or social media has impacted modes of governance and the public sphere. According to Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein (2010), "social media is a community of internetbased applications that allows the formation and circulation of user generated content which rests on the ideological and technological foundation of web 2.0. Social media is also known as 'New Media'. This new media refers to those digital media that require some form of computing which is not required in old media like T.V, radio etc and which is interactive, supports two way communication. India has witnessed a paradigm shift in the last decade due to the growth of internet supported new modes of communication as the citizens are becoming active since the new thing about this "new media" is its interactivity. The pace of diffusion of new media is much higher than the old media which resulted in the changing dynamics of governance, health sector, education and even the democracy at grassroot level (Jeffery; Doron, 2013, pp.23). The 21st century is the age of "informatization" as the arrival of information technology leads to social and economic growth (Roger and Singhal, 2010). It is becoming highly effective by the process of 'building social authority' as it has provided the space to the people to participate in the "conversation" with the hopes that their opinions can be important and influential in that conversation (Mathur, 2012).
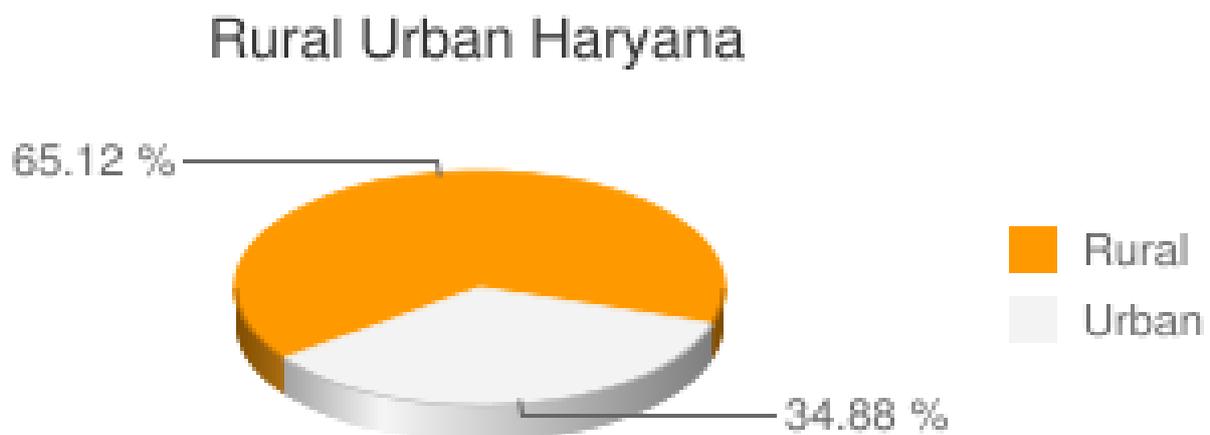
India is a developing country where almost 70% of its people live in rural areas as Mahatma Gandhi once said that the real India lives in its villages and that villages are the real home for farmers. But in India, there has been a rural-urban divide because the economic policies framed

by the government have given more importance to urban areas, as it is believed that industries carry the potential to generate more income and can increase the growth rate which automatically percolates down to rural areas. This scenario led to unequal growth of rural areas which widened the gap between rural and urban areas. ICTs are expected to bridge this gap by providing service and information which can leapfrog the rural areas to the stage of advancement. The Government of India has taken many steps to incorporate ICT enabled services with a view to ensure better service delivery and transparency in government dealings. Online services have been started by the government as the internet has become a necessity which carries the potential to take the whole world under one roof and enable the flow of information and communication smoothly and easily. Due to the growth in such technology, the country witnessed a digital divide between rural and urban areas which is evident from the fact that in rural areas population is quite high and at the same time internet penetration is quite low as compared to urban areas. To bridge this gap central and many state governments have taken various steps by using web2.0 technology like e-government, e-panchayats, Gyandoot in Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh etc.

Understanding the state of Haryana

Haryana formed in 1966 situated in North Indian region. It has 6 administrative divisions, 22 districts, 154 cities and towns, 72 divisions, 140 community development blocks, 6848 villages and 6222 village panchayats. As per the census of 2011, the state has the population of 2.54 crores and ranked 22nd in terms of areas. As many as 65.12% live in rural areas and 34.88% in urban.

(Source: census 2011)

International Journal of Research in Economics & Social Sciences

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The census of 2011 also shows that the average literacy rate in rural areas is 71.42% and in urban areas it is 83.14%. According to the economic survey of Haryana 2013-2014, despite being a small state as it is just 1.3% of the total area of the country contributes around 4% to India's GDP. It has the fifth highest per capita income among the states and union territories of India. According to these figures Haryana is doing exceptionally well in terms of growth and development.

E-government initiatives of the Government of India.

The OECD (2001) has identified 8 characteristics of good governance i.e participation, transparency, effectiveness, responsiveness, consensus orientation, enquiry and inclusiveness, accountability and rule of law. To ensure good governance in India, the government has taken up e- government initiatives which has its roots in the 10th 5 year plan (2002-2007) when the government has spent US $ 4.92 billion from its budget on the implementation of e-government projects. The department of Electronic and Information Technology (Deity) and the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) together formulated the National e-governance Plan (NeGP) which consist of 27(now 44) Mission Mode Projects (MMPs) out of which 10 components have been accepted by the central government on May 18, 2006 (Singh& Vigneshwara, et all, 2017). These initiatives were taken with the aim to make all the government services accessible to the common man and to ensure transparency, efficiency & making the government accountable. Aadhar, digital lockers, e-sign, Paygov, Jan Dhan Yojana, mobile based digital identity, nation digital literacy mission, e-bhasha, for e-participation initiatives like e-taal, e-Sampark, Mygov, social media like initiatives are being taken by the govt. The mission mode projects are able to deliver more than 400 million transactions per month according to the Department of Electronic and Information Technology, Government of India. The projects under MMPs are education, health, e-Vidhan, agriculture 2.0, municipalities, land records, rural developments, e-courts, India portal, road transports, police, treasuries etc (Source: digital india.gov.in).

The e-panchayats project is one such project under Mission Mode Projects which is a program of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India,making it compulsory to implement it containing 11 Panchayat Enterprise Suite (PES) across the country. The project aims to

overcome the challenges faced by villages like there is a lack of reliable communication infrastructure, delay in service delivery, low revenue scheme of Gram Panchayat etc, by offering automation of government processes and providing information in the public sphere to make governance transparent and effective. According to the report of Panchayat Enterprise Suite, 19 out of 29 states fully or partially adopted PRIASoft (Panchayati Raj Institution Accounting Software).

Internet penetration in India: looking at rural-urban digital divide.

The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and Kantar IMRB (Indian Market Research Bureau) released its report titled "Internet in India 2017" depicting that the internet users in dec 2017 has been increased by 11.34% as compared to dec 2016 making it almost 481 million users in India. The number is estimated to reach 500 million users by June 2018.

The urban regions of India have an estimated population of 455 million out of which 295 million people have access to the internet but rural India with a population of 918 million has only 186 million internet users. It is about 64.84% in urban areas while 20.26% in rural areas.

The above figures show that the rural population is much higher than urban population. The urban-rural digital divide is very acute as reflected by the figures.

As per 2014 figure despite having one of the highest growth rates of internet usage, the internet penetration is still low (only 19.19%) in India as compared to the USA which accounts for 86.75% of internet penetration ('Internet Stats Live', 2014).

### How are e-government initiatives working in Haryana?

The Economics & Information Technology Department of government of Haryana states that the state government has taken various steps to transform governance into good governance by making administration a two-way process. To ensure the timely service delivery in a transparent and hassle-free manner, the government had implemented the Haryana Right to service act, 2014.

The wired and wireless infrastructure is being strengthened, to get 5,620 villages under National Optic Fibre Network Programme which is now known as Bharatnet ensuring 100 mbps internet connectivity to all gram panchayats. The e-government projects taken up by the

state government are as follows: CM window, e-bhoomi, e-payment, e-registration, e-tendering, e-Disha, e-Tourism, e-Ticket etc. The "Digi DhanMelas" were organized by the state to promote the nationwide campaign for digital and cashless transactions. Going in line with the central government, the state has also implemented VAHAN and Sarthi e- government applications under the National Transport project in 94 RLA and RTA offices. The various activities of National Rural Health Mission (NHRM) have been integrated with Online Drug Inventory and Supply Change Management System (ODISCM) to improve the procurement and distribution system. Nearly, 5500 Atal Seva Kendra has been set up out of them 4000 are being located in villages. Haryana is the only state in India to launch Single Roof Mechanism *i.e*http://inverstharyana.in/#/ which was launched in Feb 2017 which provides a single window or office for all industrial clearances/licenses (source: Department of Information and Economics, Government Of Haryana).

The e-panchayat project has been started in 2010 in the state when the panchayats started their entries of vouchers in PRIASoft, the implementation of e-panchayat is in its final stage as every gram panchayat has its own website on National Panchayat Portal which ensure that now the physical and financial progress would be monitored by e-panchayat only (Source: Directorate of Information, Public Reforms & Languages, Government of Haryana). Most of the panchayats in the state implemented 8 PES which are local government directory, area profilers, action software, plan plus, PRIASoft, national asset dictionary, training management and national panchayat portal. Yamunanagar is the 1st district to implement 11 PES applications and Mewat, Rewari, Sirsa and Faridabad.
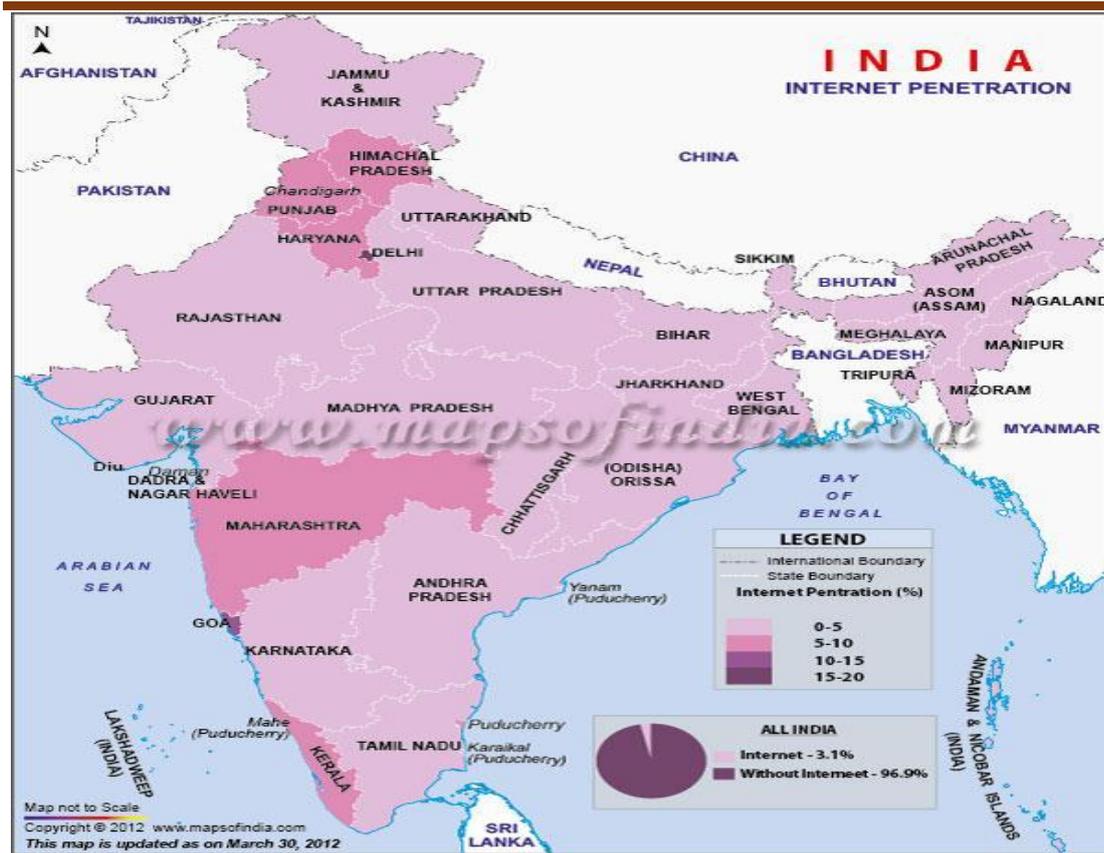
Main arguments of the paper:

According to the census of 2011, the internet penetration in the state of Haryana is only 5.3%. Despite having a reasonable growth rate and growing literacy rate even in rural areas, the government initiatives are not very much successful in the state because these are internet enabled services and internet usage is quite low in the state for now. As per the government records the wired and wireless structure is being provided to 5,620 village till date, 1228 villages are still lacking behind. When it comes to e-panchayat in Haryana the government has not fully implemented it as out of 21 districts it is only implemented in 5 districts. The new modes of communication are far from being extended in the rural areas of the state. India still have a long way to go in making it digital as if we talk about whole country, the world bank reports depicts that there are 872.3 million people lives below the poverty line in this whole world and after Nigeria and congo, India has the third highest number of people living below the poverty line in January 2019. To make India digital it is necessary to first fight with issues like illiteracy and poverty

CONCLUSION

This paper reflects the relationship between internet enabled services and its impact on the public especially the people living in rural areas by linking the emergence of ICT and how it has been used by the government. The media penetration is growing in India at a fast pace which has contributed to the growth of people's participation in public life. The emergence of social media has brought a paradigm shift in people's life as it has changed the ways we communicate and enhanced the flow of information making the world more connected. The emergence of social media has turned the people into smart mobs as interactivity, speed, simulation, connectivity provided by social media has made the people more informed. The power equation in India has undergone a change due to changes in the dynamics of governance and other sectors like education, health etc due to the emergence of social media. The government has taken initiatives to provide e-services to the people making the governance effective, efficient and transparent which has the potential to change the life of people in a positive manner but to make India digital it is necessary to work on the upliftment by providing people the basic facilities and infrastructure. To use these technologies in the day to day working or to gather information about public policies people should be trained to make them familiar with it.

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