Attitude of Political Fraternity towards E-Governance : A Case of South Rajasthan

Dr. Nityesh Bhatt*, Prof. A. K. Singh**, Prof. GMK Madnani***

Introduction :

Role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been widely accepted in all walks of life. Governments have also embraced ICT in the form of E-Governance for better service delivery and information dissemination to citizens (G-2-C) and for intra government transactions (G-2-G). With technological revolution, it is easier for the governments to maintain consistent and cordial relationship with citizens and other government departments. E-Governance has the potential to solve various problems of governance by unifying the government organisations.

1. E-Governance: Concept and Meaning :

E-Governance is the buzzword these days. It is all set to become the mantra and key success factor (k.s.f) for governments in the present fierce competitive era E-Government is the use of the Internet to conduct government business and provide public services. It marks the most dramatic shift in governance in generations and offers a fundamental restructuring of the way; government operates and interacts with citizens It enables government to guide the society, out of the industrial age into the information age. (Holmes, 2001) Governments are typically associated with complex rules, elaborate hierarchies and cumbersome procedures. E-Government has been perceived as an answer to these ills. (Sudan, 2004)

Compaq, one of the leading IT Company of world, views the definition of E-Governance as 'enabling the delivery of services to its constituents, by government, over the world wide web, more reliably, more affordably, more rapidly and with the appropriate security. As a concept, E-Governance can be perceived to be contextually inclusive e-democracy, E-Government, and e-business. (Okut-Uma, 2001) E-Governance is the continuous optimisation of service delivery, constituency participation, and governance by transforming internal and external relationship through technology, the Internet, and new media. (The Gartner Group, 2003) Introduction of E-Governance can go a long way in reinforcement of democracy and

establishing an enduring relationship between the governing and the governed through transparent and continuous two way electronic communications. (Bhatt, 2004).

The route to E-Governance is slowly emerging, as the governments and citizens around the world experiment with and learn to exploit new media and technologies like Mobile, computers, Internet and Laptops. Thus in this changing environment, E-Governance demands new styles of leadership, new ways of debating and deciding policy, new ways of accessing education, new ways of listening to citizens and new ways of organising and delivering information and services. Seven leadership milestones are integral in the transformation of becoming an E-Government. These are integration, economic development, e-democracy, e-communities, intergovernmental collaboration, congenial environment for policy framing, and next generation Internet. Achieving these milestones creates competitive advantage for the government. (Caldow, 2001)

Dr. Nityesh Bhatt*
Assoc Prof, Pacific Inst of Mgmt, Udaipur
Prof. A. K. Singh**
Former VC, ML Sukhadia Univ
Prof. GMK Madnani***
Retd HOD & Prof Economic Dept,
M I Sukhadia Univ Udaipur

Principally, E-Governance has the power to improve government processes, connect citizens and build interaction with and within civil societies, all of which are in turn the objectives of good governance itself (Heeks, 2001). The objective of E-Governance is to support and simplify governance for all parties – government, citizens and businesses. It supports and stimulates good governance through better public service delivery to Indian citizens and businesses, transparency in information and easier citizen access to government authorities. Kalam & Rajan (2001) identifies the crucial role of ICT sector for transforming India into a developed nation, till the year 2020. They emphasized the need to connect clusters of villages through all required infrastructure, services and information for removal of asymmetry between the rural and urban area. Kalam (2005) also echoed his concern for the creation of Village Knowledge Centre (VKC) for the rural transformation and to become a developed nation by 2020. Karnik (2004) advocated the need to launch a major national mission for E-Governance, which should aim at increasing the efficiency of government and providing better citizen services.

Successful implementation of E-Governance enables transition from 'passive information giving' to an 'active citizen involvement' through the following ways:-

• Informing the citizens about various government plans, policies, programmes and their progress.

• Representing the citizens – at appropriate national and international forums

• Encouraging the citizens to express their views and register their complaints

• Consulting the citizens while framing budgets and plans

• Engaging the citizens in monitoring and reviewing the work. (Malick & Murthy, 2001)

2. Rationale of the the study:

South Rajasthan, also known as Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) region has wide disparity between the tribals and non-tribal community. Due to lack of any visible opportunity to survive with dignity, there is simmering discontent among the tribals. Government has come up with lot many schemes to look after the welfare status of the tribals of our country but much publicized and projected human face of these schemes have not provided genuine remedy to the ailment. Tribals are still exploited due to usurious practices of middlemen and they are still in the clutches of middlemen and traders. Tribals due to lack of information do not get right price for their agriculture yield, pay exorbitant price for seeds, fertilizer and other necessities. Those engaged in mining and other construction work as labourers, get miniscule amount as daily wage and overtime.

Social scientists also opine that various schemes and programmes implemented under the TSP strategy need paradigm shift. E-Governance can make headway and become instrumental in bringing about social and economic changes in the lives of the tribal population through such a paradigm shift. Like many other States, Rajasthan government has also initiated mane E-Governanment projects for the welfare of its citizens. Through LokMitra and Jan-Mitra E-Government projects (Government to Citizen (G2C) models), now E-Mitra, citizens obtain following government services from the computer kiosks available at many parts of State:

(a)   Copy of land Record

(b)   Market Prices of various farm products in different mandies on daily basis

(c)   Information on weather, diseases and their solutions by experts

(d)   Online availability and submission of all kinds of forms – Caste certificate, Birth certificate, Ration card etc.

(e)   Any kind of grievance can be raised to appropriate authority thus citizens are part of social change. Some of the grievances are mentioned below:

- Faulty hand pump
- Frequent Power Break down
- Theft in village
- Doctors do not come to the hospital

- Kind of pesticides to use for particular crop etc.

Beneficiaries of this project are poor, illiterate and hitherto exploited tribals, who feel more informed, empowered and part of mainstream due to this electronic revolution. In these areas, demographics are more or less similar to the South Rajasthan; therefore we assumed that implementation of E-Governance shall yield significant benefits for poor tribals and villagers in this region as well. The present study is therefore, designed to assess the awareness of politicians about e-governance and thereby study the mindset/attitude of these constitutional authorities for the e-governance drive in the tribal dominated south Rajasthan.

Politicians as policy makers are one of the main entities or stakeholders in the E-Governance implementation. They set the direction, decide the priorities and whose vision establishes an environment for every development activity in the State. Therefore, the success or failure of E-Governance is directly related to acceptance or rejection of such system the political leadership. Consultancy firm, Accenture (2000), in their eGovernance model, sought three primary components. Leadership is one of them as it shape the strategic vision, culture, goals, metrics and plans for action. In this group, current and ex- ministers having different portfolios, MLAs, MPs and other influential politicians of south Rajasthan from both ruling as well as non-ruling party were included.

3. Area of the Study : South Rajasthan is also known as Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) region and comprises of three full districts Banswara, Dungarpur and Udaipur; two tehsils, Arnod and Pratapgarh from Chittorgarh district, and One tehsil Abu Road from Sirohi District. Our study encompasses all the 19 tehsils of three districts of TSP region i.e. Banswara, Dungarpur and Udaipur with total area of 23,541 Sq. Kms. Based on 2001 census, total population of this region is 52,39,667, of which 55 percent is tribal population.

4. Research Design: Due to the nascent status of E-Governance in India; absence of any E-Governance project in the region and limited availability of useful literature, research was exploratory in nature. Survey method was used for collecting data for our study. In the Survey method, both Primary and Secondary researches were used for collecting

comprehensive information. Interview technique was used to collect primary data on E-Governance. Through face-to-face interview, we could judge their depth of conviction and commitment in the E-Governance initiative. Interview was semi-structured in nature, in which broad aspects were decided earlier and within the permissible framework, as the situation unveiled, questions were asked. Instrument was pre tested on five politicians in Udaipur. After the pre testing, some questions were removed while some questions were clubbed.

4.1 Sample Design: A sample of 30 top politicians was obtained from three districts of South Rajasthan based on judgement and convenience.

Table 1 presents the social class wise sample profile of politicians' sample:

Table No. 1: District Wise Social Status Wise Composition of Politicians' Sample

District	Tribal	Non-Tribal	Total
Udaipur	4	9	13
Banswara	4	5	8
Dungarpur	3	5	9
Total	**11**	**19**	**30**

In the sample, 11 (37 percent) politicians were from the tribal community while 19 (63%) politicians were representing the non-tribal community. Gender wise, 25 (83 percent) politicians were male while five (17 %) sample respondents were female. Majority of respondents (80 percent) have represented the TSP region either in Assembly, Parliament, or at various district level Corporations.

Educated politicians can understand the developmental issues like E-Governance in a better manner than the uneducated group. Therefore education variable has been included for the politicians' category also. Table 2 lists the academic profile of

sample respondents-

Table No. 2: Educational Profile of the Sample of Politicians

Educational Status	Number of Politicians
Post Graduation and above	14
Graduation	11
Secondary and Senior Secondary	3
Up to Middle Class	2

From the table, it can be concluded that while all the respondents were educated, the majority (80 %) of politicians included in the sample own graduation or the post graduation degree. This is a healthy sign for the establishment of E-Governance in the TSP region.

5. Analytical Description of Responses

5.1 Awareness about E-Governance: Almost all the politicians were aware about computer and its applications, of which 70 percent (21) politicians explained the concept of computer in detail while the remaining respondents had little knowledge. Around 43 percent respondents found to possess personal computer at their home, one respondent also owns laptop computer. Almost 23 percent (7) politicians' computers are connected with Internet.

Nearly 37 percent politicians are familiar with the concept of E-Governance. Around 27 percent respondents were fully familiar with it while 10 percent held partial knowledge about the electronic system. Surprisingly, 40 percent respondents were aware of the concept but had never heard the term E-Governance. Remaining 23 percent respondents did not have any idea about E-Governance. Around 53 percent (16) respondents also discussed about the Right to Information Act and said that electronic interface may be instrumental in exercising this act in effective manner.

Around 23 percent respondents were familiar with E-Governance projects - Gram Darpan, Lok Mitra and Soochana Mitra started locally in different districts of TSP region. Almost 40 percent politicians discussed the existence of some projects in the State of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

5.2. Attitude towards E-Governance: Respondents stated many advantages of electronic system of governance. Out of these, Transparent functioning (90%), socio-economic development (78%), reduction in corruption (88%) and vibrancy of government (66%) were the main advantages. Some respondents also mentioned that E-Governance possess the potential to strengthen the democracy and panchayati raj system (42%) by empowering the tribals. Almost all the sample respondents wanted rapid implementation of E-Governance in the TSP region.

According to political fraternity, system of E-Governance shall lead the region towards development. However, initially educated and elite people will use it and others will follow them at later point of time. In the opinion of all the politicians, all the people will derive benefits from this system. According to the politicians of congress party, E-Governance is the brainchild of late Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi while the politicians of BJP attribute it to the progressive vision of former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Chief Minister of Rajasthan Smt. Vasundhara Raje Sindhia.

In the views of majority of respondents, tribal illiteracy, unsupportive attitude of employees, infrastructural bottlenecks (road, electricity, telephone), high corruption and lack of funds are the main challenges in the implementation of E-Governance. However majority of them discussed about growing education among tribals, which will ultimately facilitate the establishment of E-Governance in the TSP region.

In the opinion of the political fraternity, effective implementation of E-Governance requires strong basic education among the tribal community and the provision of formal computer training for the government officials. Majority of respondents complained about the attitude of employees, but suggested to personalize the benefits during the training programmes for overcoming their resistance. In the views of 80 percent respondents, young employees have craze for computer, therefore they may play pivotal role in the establishment of E-Governance.

All the respondents had faith in the ability of tribals in learning and using the computers. According to them, Tribals shall pay the nominal amount fixed by government, for availing the desired information and services as they have been doing it in present system also. When politicians were asked about possibility of online redressal of grievances, around 67 percent (20) politicians showed optimism about it. According to them, top management commitment towards E-Governance shall be a critical factor for sustenance of the electronic system of governance.

6. Statistical Analysis of the Responses:

In this section, an attempt has been made to statistically analyse the responses of politicians' sample to examine whether their awareness and attitude about E-Governance differ significantly across their social class (Tribal and Non-Tribal). As mentioned earlier, sample size was 30, of which 11 are tribals while 19 are non-tribals. We have also tried to examine the responses of politicians towards the impact of E-Governance on enhancing the pace of development in south Rajasthan and curbing of corruption from the government functioning. In this way, this section deals with following two sub-sections:

i. Test of Dependence of social class of politicians on their awareness and attitude towards E-Governance

ii. Test of difference of means between two samples

i. Test of Dependence of politicians' social class on their awareness and attitude towards E-Governance:

To study whether the level of awareness and attitude of politicians about E-Governance depends on their social class, Chi-Square test has been applied. Two hypotheses are formulated to test their significance and derive inferences from the obtained results. These are given below:

Hypothesis 1: The level of awareness about E-Governance of a politician is independent of social class to which he belongs.

Ha: The level of awareness about E-Governance of a politician depends upon his social class.

The Null hypothesis is tested using Chi-square test at 5% level of significance. Table 3 gives the results.
Table 3: Dependence of Social Class on Level of Awareness About E-Governance

Size of sample of Politicians who belong to tribal community	Size of sample of Politicians who belong to Non-tribal community	Calculated Chi Value	Tabulated Chi Value at 5% sign. Level	Degrees of Freedom (r-1) x (c-1)	Result
11	19	0.22	5.991	2	Null Hypothesis Accepted

Note : c here means number of columns while r represents the number of rows in the table of observed frequencies. Chi- Square has been calculated by taking the mean scores of the responses on the variable 'awareness about E-Governance' for the politicians, who belong to tribal and non-tribal communities.

Since the calculated value of Chi Square (0.22) is less than the tabulated value (5.991) at 5% level of significance, null hypothesis stands accepted. Therefore, it may be concluded that level of awareness about E-Governance among politicians is irrespective of whether they are from tribal or non-tribal community.

This phenomenon can be explained by following facts.

1) High education of politicians included in the sample may be the prime reason for good amount of awareness about E-Governance.

2) Politicians regularly update themselves on the political and developmental issues taking place in the State and Country through newspapers and other sources. E-Governance is one of the emerging issues, which has attracted the attention of political community.

3) Politicians have deep contacts with the top officers of the state and district, through which they obtain contemporary information. High awareness about E-Governance can be attributed to this factor also.

Hypothesis 2: Attitude of a politician towards E-Governance is independent of his social class.

Ha: Attitude of a politician towards E-Governance depends upon his social class.
The Null hypothesis is being tested at 5% level of significance. Table 4 gives the results.

Table 4: Dependence of Social Class on Attitude Towards E-Governance

Size of sample of Politicians who belong to tribal community	Size of sample of Politicians who belong to Non-tribal community	Calculated Chi Value	Tabulated Chi Value at 5% sign. Level	Degrees of Freedom (r-1) x (c-1)	Result
11	19	1.09	7.81	3	Null Hypothesis is not Rejected

Since the calculated value of Chi Square (1.09) is less than the tabulated value (7.81) at 5% level of significance, we can not reject the null hypothesis, which states that attitude of politicians about E-Governance is independent of their social class. Majority of the respondents, irrespective of their social class showed positive attitude about the implementation of E-Governance in the TSP region. It can be inferred from the following arguments-
- Politicians have started realizing that the technology plays pivotal role in the development of any region and without adopting the technology neither individual nor region can prosper.

- Another reason may be that they want to prove themselves as extremely benevolent for people and the society.

ii. Test of difference of means between two samples:
Since the sample size of politicians is 30, t-test is being applied for testing the difference between the means of two samples based on the social classes (Tribal and Non-Tribal). Two null hypothesis are formulated to study whether all politicians respond favourably on the impact of Electronic Governance on various dimensions-

Hypothesis 1: Politicians irrespective of their social class, respond favourably to the statement that 'E-Governance shall enhance the pace of development of TSP region'.

Therefore

$$H_0 : \overline{x_1} = \overline{x_2}$$

($\overline{x_1}$ = $\overline{x_2}$ here depict the means of tribal and non-tribal politicians on the statement 'Impact of E-Governance on development').

H_a – Politicians do not respond favourably to the statement that 'E-Governance shall enhance the pace of development of TSP region'.

Or

$$H_0 : \overline{x_1} \text{ not equals to } \overline{x_2}$$

Mean* of Tribal Politicians' Sample	Mean* of Non-Tribal Politicians' Sample	Calculated t- Value	Result
x_1 =4.012	x_2 =4.223	-0.63	Null Hypothesis Accepted

Since the calculated t-value (-0.63) is more than the tabulated value (– 1.96) at 5 % significance level, we accept the null hypothesis. Therefore, it may be said that politicians favourably respond to the statement that E-Governance can enhance the pace of development of TSP region.

The above mentioned results can be justified from the following arguments:

- Positive attitude of politicians for E-Governance may be the result of their interaction with many experts within and outside the State, and observation of the best practices related to E-Governance and other ICT applications.

- Politicians also know that computerization leads to employment and increases the efficiency of existing workforce. Therefore such an attitude may show their progressive image.

- Such attitude may also be idea of gaining popularity.

Hypothesis 2: All politicians respond favourably to the statement that 'E-Governance shall curb the corruption and mismanagement ingrained in the existing system of governance'.

H_a : **Politicians do not respond favourably to the statement that 'E-Governance shall curb the corruption and mismanagement ingrained in the existing system of governance'.**

Null hypothesis is tested at 95 % confidence level. Results obtained are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Test of Difference of Means between the Responses of Tribal & Non-Tribal Politicians

Mean* of Tribal Politicians' Sample	Mean* of Non-Tribal Politicians' Sample	Calculated t- Value	Result
x_1=3.719	X_2=3.922	-0.2163	Null Hypothesis Accepted

* This depicts the mean scores on an open-ended question 'Impact of E-Governance on enhancing the pace of development' asked directly from the tribal and non-tribal respondents.

Since the calculated t-Value (-0.2162) is more than the tabulated value (- 1.96) at 5 % significance level, null hypothesis is accepted which states that politicians own favourable opinion towards E-Governance for curbing the corruption and mismanagement ingrained in the existing system of governance.

That may be understood by the fact that by sharing such views they want to project themselves as caring and concerned for the development of people. Another reason might be the realization by the political fraternity that government officials are not loyal to any political party, so by favouring people's concerns, their long term loyalty and trust can be ensured.

7. Suggestions:

Qualitative and quantitative analysis of politicians' responses reveal that attitude of politicians is almost positive towards E-Governance while their awareness is very low; following suggestions may be of some help:

- Public representatives (Sarpanch, MLA, MP) must be made computer literate for rapid acceptance of E-Governance in the society. After training, they can lead E-Governance initiative in their area by spreading positive message. For achieving this objective, planning at central and state level is necessary.

- All MLAs and MPs must be provided essential training on E-Governance from some reputed agency. Government may also plan to provide laptops to all elected representatives.

- Chief Minister and other senior ministers must showcase their own example through effective IT usage.

- Government should hold regular communication meetings at different levels with the politicians and make them a part of the E-Governance implementation team in their respective constituency. They must be encouraged to talk about their concerns and suggestions before implementation of E-Governance in their area.

- For every E-Governance pilot project, these politicians can be made as patron. This will also make them conscious towards this new mode of governance.

References:

—, (2000).
The eSeries III- Government at eSpeed Ensuring Flexibility for an Evolving eBusiness. Outlook Special Edition, Retrived November 18, 2005 from http:// www.accenture.com/Global/Research_and_Insights/ Outlook/By_Alphabet/EnsuringEBusiness.htm
—, 2001.
"Computer education is a necessity in Villages". Express Computer - IT People Vol.5 No.18 January 29, P.6
—,2001.
Report of National Workshop on IT Policies & Their Implementation, CSI Communications November, PP. 7-13
—,2001.
"Our efforts is targeted at the information deprived in remote areas". Express Computer -IT people Vol. 11 No. 44, P.6
—, 2004.
Dainik Bhaskar, February 08
—,2004.
"CEO Raje meets her top executives from the districts". Hindustan Times, February 10
—,2004.
Dainik Bhaskar, February 08
—,2005.
"Knowledge centres for rural growth". Business standard, July 12
—,2005.
"CEO E-governance in changing times". Economic Times, September 22
Bhatt N., 2004
"Establishment of Democracy through E-Governance". Book Enhancing Performance – Agenda for Growth edited by Dhar U., Dhar S. & Phatak Y. Published by Excel Books PP. 187-191
Harvard Policy Group, 2000
"Eight imperatives for leaders of the networked world. Imperative Two: Use of IT for Strategic Innovation, Not simply Tactical Automation". Cambridge Massachusetts: HPG publications
Heeks R, 2001
"Understanding E-Governance for development", I-government working paper series:Working paper No. 11. Manchester: University of Manchester
Holmes D., 2001
"e-Gov: eBusiness Strategies for Government",

Published by Nicholas Brealey Publishing, London

Kalam A. APJ, 2001.
"India Millennium Missions 2020: Challenges".
University News Vol. 39 No. 31 July 30

Karnik K., 2004.
"I want...... A National Mission for E-Governance".
The Financial Express April 11, P. 7
Malick M. H., & Murthy, A.V.K., 2001
"The challenges of E-Governance". Indian Journal of
Public Administration Vol. 47 No.20, PP 237-53

Mitra R.K. & MP Gupta, 2003.
"Lessons from E-Governance In India", Indian
Management, Vol. 42 No. 8 August, PP 52-59

Okut-Uma W.O., 2001
"Electronic Governance: Reinventing good gover-
nance" London: Commonwealth Secretariat

Speech of Sam Pitroda,
World Tel Chief & DataQuest Life Time achievement
Awards 2002 Winner, during Cyber Media's 20th
Anniversary Celebrations & DataQuest Awards night
in Dec. 2002
SreeKumar R., 2004.
"Boosting Citizen Friendliness". DataQuest Vol. 22

No. 05 March 15, P. 82

Sudan R., 2004,
"At the Speed of Now". The Financial Express The
Smart Manager, April 1

Verma P., 2002.
"E-Government throws up opportunities". The
Economic Times, Oct. 16

Web Sites :
http://www.accenture.com/Global/
Research_and_Insights/Outlook/By_Alphabet/
TheEGovernance.htm
www.nasscom.org
www.mit.gov.in
http://Rajasthan.gov.in
www.Inomy.com
www.cmil.com
www.csi-india.org.
www.gartner.com
http://www.digitalgovernance.org