Reinventing Governance through Digital Transformation: A Citizen-Centric Pathway to Viksit Bharat 2047

M Rajeshwari
Alumna, Department of Public Administration,
University College of Arts and Social Sciences, Osmania University, Hyderabad.

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Abstract

India's journey towards Viksit Bharat 2047 marks a decisive moment in redefining governance for a new era. The growing reliance on digital technologies has reshaped how government interact with citizens, moving from procedural administration to participatory and transparent governance. This paper examines how digital transformation, when aligned with administrative reforms, can strengthen accountability, inclusion, and service delivery within the framework of good governance.

Based on the principles of Digital-Era Governance, the study explores how initiatives such as Digital India, DigiLocker, UMANG, UPI, SVAMITVA and Aadhaar have restructured traditional bureaucratic practices. It highlights how these interventions have enhanced accessibility and responsiveness in public services, while also acknowledging persisting challenges like digital inequality, cyber-crimes, data protection, and administrative inertia.

The discussion further considers the emerging role of technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics in improving decision-making and public communication. The findings highlight significant improvements in service delivery, economic transactions, and citizen participation. Moreover, the study emphasizes the importance of digital literacy, departmental training, and capacity building to ensure equitable access and long-term sustainability of digital governance initiatives across diverse socio-economic contexts.

In conclusion, the paper offers perspective as the success of digital governance in realizing Viksit Bharat 2047 will depend not merely on technological advancement, but on the ability of institutions to rebuild public trust, inclusion through human centred innovation and citizen awareness, contributes to ongoing discourse surrounding governance through Digital Transformation. Reinventing governance, therefore is not about replacing bureaucracy- it is about reimagining its purpose in the digital age.

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1. Introduction

India today stands among the top five economies globally- a testament to its sustained reforms, digital innovation, and inclusive growth trajectory. International Monetary Fund forecasts India will be the third largest economy by 2028 overtaking Germany. We are not only growing faster but we are also setting standards. When India grows, the whole world grows. In the last century, when India won its freedom, it inspired many other countries to free themselves from colonial rule. In this 21st century, India defines a new standard for how governance should function – efficient, transparent, digital, and citizen driven and becomes a model for national progress and inspire many other countries to do the same.

Administration as a practice may be as old as civilization which began as the simple art of organising people and resources to meet collective needs. In Indian context, the Mahabharata by Ved Vyas, the Ramayan by Valmiki and the Arthashastra by Kautilya are considered to be the works related to Public Administration. Arthashastra deals with science of polity, which, according to Kautilya, is a combination of science of wealth and science of government. To Kautilya, finance provides the view of government and financial considerations are paramount in the government's activities.

The definition of Administration is defined by L.D. White as "The art of administration is the direction, co-ordination and control of many persons to achieve some purpose or objective". By late 1880's Woodrow Wilson, the father of Public Administration defined Public Administration as the detailed and systematic application of law. Every application of law is an act of administration.

By 1990's democracy had similar ethos that of bureaucracy. Democracy believed in equality of individuals; bureaucracy advocated to treat everyone equal (impersonal laws). According to Max Weber, bureaucracy is a legal rational authority and it is most efficient organization because of predictability and preciseness.

The World Bank for the first time in 1989 highlighted the concept of good governance. To understand what is meant by governance, one may compare and contrast with the term government. Governance and Government are always closely associated. The government is a machinery or institution which is meant to exercise sovereign power to accomplish certain goals- political, economic and social, whereas governance is a process as well as result of making authoritative decisions for the benefit of the society.

India's e-governance journey began with foundational steps in the 1970-80's notably with the formation of the Department of Electronics in 1970 and establishment of National Information Centre (NIC) in 1977. In 1987, the NICNET satellite network and the District Information System of the National Informatics Centre (DISNIC) played a pivotal role by digitizing manual operations in district offices and providing state governments with free software and hardware The Information Technology Act, 2000 originated in late 1990's to regulate internet use, drafted in 1998, revised for World Trade Organisation and e-commerce compliance, and approved by Union Cabinet in 2000. The Right to Information Act 2005, came into effect on October 12, 2005, guaranteeing citizens the right to request information from public authorities within a time-bound framework. The modern era of e-governance was formalized with the launch of the comprehensive National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) in 2006, and later significantly expanded with the Digital India Mission in 2015.

Driven by Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain and 5G, Digital India is on the path to transformative growth. Thes technologies will enhance service delivery and transparency. Initiatives such as BharatNet and Digital India 2.0 are set up to bridge the gap between infrastructure and connectivity. As these initiatives pick up pace, governance will become inclusive and accessible to all. Although India faced prolonged challenges, the focus on digital transformation

opens up numerous opportunities, ensuring that governance is efficient, citizen centric and will pave the way for a digitalised economy.

2. Objectives:

To understand the evolution of administration from ancient times to digital era.

To study how digital transformation restricted the traditional bureaucratic practices. To analyse impact of Government Online Service initiatives.

To identify challenges in achieving inclusive and transparent digital governance.

3. Research Methodology:

This study employs qualitative approach to provide a comprehensive analysis of digital governance transformation initiatives in India. A collection of primary data from the questionnaire and secondary data was collected from various government websites, official reports, academics journals, research papers, and credible online sources.

4. Review of Literature:

Piyush Kumarendra and Rudrabhan Singh Highlights India's journey towards digital transformation with special reference to Digital India initiative with the core objective of program being digitally linking citizens and ensure the efficient provision of government programs and services. This paper also examines the challenges faced while implementing Digital India and identifies potential areas for expansion and improvement for sustaining the initiative.

Hoimonti Banerjee and Mohit Kumar Nandi (2025) analyses India's DigiLocker initiative as a crucial component of digital India framework, emphasizing its contribution to paperless governance, administrative efficiency and transparency. Their study highlights the system's benefits in reducing costs and enhancing service delivery but also notes persistent challenges such as limited digital literacy, data privacy concerns, and low rural adoption. They recommend support to strengthen its implementation.

Dr Ashok K L and Dr Vinay S (2025) This paper portrays UMANG application as vital part of India's digital governance evolution, it made government services accessible, transparent and efficient. It contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals by reducing administrative barriers and promotes inclusivity. However, the application faces challenges related to technological proficiency, consistency of service delivery and user engagement. Suggests measure to tackle digital divide through training and inclusivity measures, digital infrastructure improvement, and boost awareness of service availability.

Ms Manisha Tripathi et al. (2024) The research highlights the diverse impacts of UPI adoption, ranging from enhanced financial inclusion to the promotion of cashless transactions and the bolstering of traditional banking services. While the majority of respondents perceive UPI as positively contributing to financial inclusion and reducing black money, there remain concerns regarding its impact on cashless transactions and transaction speed. says that even though UPI has moved towards expanding access to financial services for some, there are still many challenges and barriers that need to be addressed to ensure their inclusion. Making efforts to address issues such as digital literacy, network connectivity, and trust in the financial systems could help close the gap and ensure that UPI's benefits are accessible to all parts of society.

Chetan Gupta (2025) Beyond the quantifiable results, SVAMITVA has considerably impacted people's lives across rural areas of India. The scheme improves the socio-economic standard of vulnerable populations in villages by giving them access to property rights. Land disputes are a primary conflicting concern all over India. SVAMITVA aims to address the root causes by clearing the demarcation of *Abadi* areas, smoothening land governance and enhancing village infrastructure facilities. A periodic convergence of this scheme with other rural development schemes will accelerate the impact and enable socio-economic transformation at the grassroots. As the scheme moves beyond its early stages, its success hinges on robust implementation, stakeholder coordination, and addressing emerging challenges.

Nishant Anand this paper highlights that since its launch in 2009, Aadhaar has been at the centre of an intense socio-political debate. Its role has expanded from a voluntary ID to a mandatory requirement for accessing state and private sector benefits. analyses Aadhaar's impact on the citizen-state relationship through the lenses of availability, access and inclusion, privacy, security, and identity management, highlighting intended and unintended consequences of this technological intervention. Through Aadhaar, the government seeks to strengthen citizen-state relationship – from one that was hampered by bureaucratic inefficiencies and an error-prone system into one that works on the definitiveness of technology.

5. Digital Transformation In Indian Governance:

On 1st July 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Digital India with an aim to use technology to make life easier for every Indian. It is a national mission that underpins Atmanirbhar Bharat, reflecting the strength, capability and self-reliance of confident India in the 21st century.

The digital economy contributed 11.74% to national income in 2022-23 and is projected to rise to 13.42% by 2024-25 driven by advancements in artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and digital infrastructure. India ranks third globally in digital infrastructure and, by 2030, the digital economy is expected to account for nearly one-fifth of overall GDP.

6. Achievements:

Growth in Electronics Manufacturing: Production of electronic goods increased from **Rs1.9 lakh crore in 2014-15 to Rs11.3 lakh crore in 2024-25,** marking a 6-fold growth.

Enhanced Telecommunication infrastructure: Telephone connections increased from **93.3 crore (2014) to 120+ crore (2025)**. Mobile subscribers reached **116 crore (2025).**

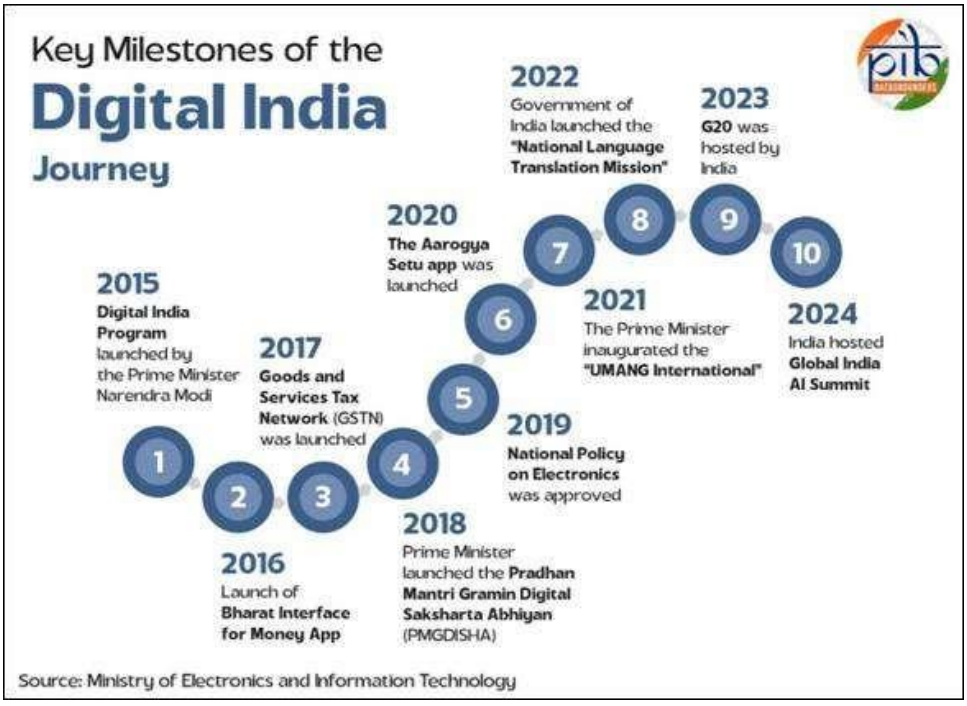
Internet and digital connectivity: Internet connections Internet connections jumped from **25.15 crore in March 2014 to 96.96 crore in June 2024,** registering a growth of 285.53%.

5G and connectivity: 5G was launched in October 2022, speeding up digital services, **4.74 lakh 5G towers,** covering **99.6% of districts.**

7. **Initiatives:**

DIGITAL INDIA:

The Digital India Mission, launched in July 2015, signifying the onset of a new era in the digital revolution. The Digital India initiative represents a goal of transitioning India into a knowledge- driven economy and a digitally empowered society. This initiative seeks to bridge gap between government departments and citizens, aiming for good governance and better access to welfare services. By harnessing the power of technology, Digital India strives to create opportunities, strengthen India's growth, and uplift communities. This mission leverages the vast capabilities of the digital realm to propel the nation's development forward.



DigiLOCKER:

DigiLocker is a key initiative by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) that enables secure, consent-based access to authentic digital documents that are the legal equivalent to physical copies. It supports real-time verification, reduces administrative overhead, and advances paperless governance, streamlining service delivery across sectors. Its linkage with Aadhaar and e-KYC has streamlined onboarding, while real-time access to verified documents has enabled faster service delivery across sectors like education, transport, and health.

UMANG Application:

Unified Mobile Application New-Age Governance (UMANG) is a part of Digital India initiative launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on November 23, 2017 with 160+ services. It provides a single platform for all Indian citizens to access to pan-India e-Gov services ranging from Central to Local Government bodies. As of March 2025, UMANG

offers 2,132 services in 23 languages, with 8.71 crore registrations and 626.24 crore transactions. The process of refining UMANG has become a continuous "work in progress", said Ms Chauhan, the pioneering UMANG leader.

UNIFIED PAYMENTS INTERFACE (UPI):

Unified Payment Interface (UPI) is a real time payment system that enables instant money transfers between bank accounts through a mobile application. It is built on the Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) infrastructure. UPI brings multiple bank accounts into a single app and supports various features such as fund transfers, merchant payments, and peer-to-peer payment requests, making digital transactions quick and convenient. UPI serves 491 million individuals, 65 million merchants, and connects 675 banks on one platform.

SVAMITVA (Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improvised Technology in Village Areas):

SVAMITVA Scheme was launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on National Panchayati Raj Day, 24th April 2020 to promote rural economic growth by providing "Record of Rights" to every rural household. Using modern drone-based surveying technology, the scheme aims to map inhabited (*Abadi*) land in villages accurately. It is a collaborative effort of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, State Revenue Departments, State Panchayati Raj Departments and Survey of India. The initiative helps villagers monetize their properties, access bank loans and reducing property related disputes while aiding local planning and governance. Covering 3.20 lakh villages so far, the scheme runs from 2020-21 to 2025-26 and has mapped around 68,122 square kilometres, based on the average size of the inhabited areas in each village.

AADHAAR:

India's Aadhaar program, launched in 2009, is the world's largest biometric-based identification system. It provides a 12-digit unique identification number linked to an individual's biometric (fingerprints, iris scans) and demographic data. Administered by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), Aadhaar aims to streamline welfare delivery, reduce fraud, and enhance national security. However, it has sparked significant debates on privacy, surveillance, and exclusion. It made verification faster, reduced paperwork, and brought transparency across sectors. As of April 2025, 142 crore Aadhaar IDs have been generated. Masked aadhaar cards represent a positive step towards safeguarding individual privacy while maintaining the functionality of aadhaar as a crucial identification.

E-GRAM SWARAJ:

e- GramSwaraj is an important Panchayat Enterprise Suite (PES) of Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR). It promotes transparency and strengthens e-Governance in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) through decentralised planning, progress tracking and accounting. By improving credibility and accountability, it helps Panchayats receive greater devolution of funds to PRIs. Furthermore, e-GramSwaraj provides platform for effective monitoring by higher authorities. Currently over 2.7 Lakh Panchayati Raj Institutions across 28 States and 6 Union Territories use this platform.

In 2024, its integration with AI-powered tools under the Bhashini initiative made services available in 22 scheduled languages of India, enhancing inclusivity. This step bridges language barriers, empowers local governance, boosts citizen participation, and ensures more efficient service delivery in rural areas

8. Findings:

This study draws responses focusing on perceptions of key digital government initiatives under the Digital India

framework. The instrument included Likert-scale items (strongly disagree to strongly agree) evaluating ten statements related to services such as Aadhaar, UMANG, DigiLocker, UPI, e-GramSwaraj, SVAMITVA, e-Governance, accessibility, trust and overall satisfaction. The responses were aggregate, reflecting the need for measures to address the challenges. This qualitative and quantitative blend captures statistical trends and the human experiences of new technological adoption in our developing country.

Neutral responses predominated in most of the statements, reflecting the reality rather than just a collection of data.

- Aadhaar and UMANG got around 25% neutrals, 15-20% agreed it and around 10% choose disagreement, indicating functional reliability but could be less complicated procedure.
- DigiLocker showed a modest positive response with 20% agreeing its utility document management and aspiring for digital vault for saving your certificates.
- For UPI over 25% strongly agreeing as a saviour for cashless transaction especially during COVID times.
- e-GramSwaraj and SVAMITVA drew over 30% neutrality with modest agreement, need for more reliance and local adaptation.
- About 25% opined E-Governance save time, 20% strongly trust them and 25% believe they are satisfied and improving their life overall.

9. Challenges:

There is a lack of faith in the reliability of machines, especially in sectors where manual methods have traditionally been used.

Transforming government departments from manual to digital management is a complex task that requires training a vast and diverse workforce.

Authentication Failures- Biometric mismatches have led to denial of essential services, such as food rations under the Public Distribution System (PDS).

Many government employees lack the necessary technical qualifications for their roles. Proper training is essential to ensure that the transition to digital processes is both efficient and effective.

Digital transformation is a long-term success will depend on addressing challenges related to technology adoption and digital literacy. Building local capacity and ensuring the digital inclusion of all stakeholders will be critical for effectiveness and sustainability of digital initiatives.

Many citizens have concerns about privacy, data misuse and object sharing of biometrics information remains strong, especially in absence of robust legal safeguards and clear accountability.

10. Suggestions:

By using modern day Generative Pre-trained Transformer or Artificial can reduce delays and ease the burden on human resources. Thoughtful integration of them for attendance, tracking movement of files can strengthen

transparency and trust.

A strong and accessible grievance redressal system is essential for citizen-centric governance in case they face challenges. An accessible grievance redressal mechanism may be put in place in every state, where one does not already exist, starting with proper escalation matrix (Gram Panchayat, Tehsil, District, State) for timely resolution of disputes.

Digital initiatives must balance security with individual's privacy by limiting data access and promoting responsible usage.

Increasing awareness on the digital services available to the citizens and prepare them to overcome cyber scams. Cybersecurity awareness needs to be expanded through mandatory training for governmental officials and can include it as a course for students as well.

Ethical use of AI, supported by transparency and human oversight, is necessary to ensure fairness and accountability in automated decision-making.

11. Conclusion:

The Digital India initiatives represent a visionary undertaking by the Indian Government, with the overarching goal of transitioning India into a knowledge-driven economy and a digitally empowered society. The balance between surveillance and national security versus privacy and public interest is a delicate and critical challenge in the digital age.

Viksit Bharat 2047 is a collective national commitment to transforming India's historical inheritance into a sustainable global future and its demographic potential into democratic prosperity. Procedural rigidity must give way to outcome-oriented governance powered by digital technology, public feedback, and performance accountability in the developing state of the twenty-first century. The Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDPA) 2023 marks significantly in safeguarding citizen's data. By clarifying rules around consent, data usage, and accountability, the Act paves the way for stronger privacy protections and more responsible digital practices across sectors.

The next 10 years will be pivotal for consolidating India's position as a global leader in ethical, inclusive, and innovation-driven digital development. With emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, quantum computing, blockchain, semiconductors, and space technology India is unprecedented opportunities and responsibility to the young generation to focus more on Digital literacy and create solutions for efficient e-governance making Viksit Bharat (Developed India) 2047.

The vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 roadmap is not only about sustaining technological leadership but also about reinforcing digital governance role as a secure, inclusive, and people-centric governance.

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