Maharashtra's Initiatives in Digital Governance

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Abstract*: This paper offers details of the various initiatives undertaken by the government of Maharashtra to promote digitalization and e-governance within the state. The ground work of the digitalization was began before 'Digital India' campaign 2014. The paper explore specific examples like the use of email for communication within government departments, the development of the Marathi language for online interaction, and the establishment of Mahaonline, a platform offering various government services online. Additionally, it explores m-governance, the use of mobile technology for service delivery, showcasing relevant applications. Furthermore, the document emphasizes the importance of digital literacy and mentions various government and non-governmental programs aimed at bridging the digital divide in the state.*

Keywords: Digital, e governance, mahaonline, e services

I. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has witnessed a rapid surge in digitalization. The concept of "digitalization" encompasses the broader societal shift towards digital communication and infrastructure. Fundamentally transforming how we work and interact with the world. India, along with the state of Maharashtra, has been actively involved in this digital transformation journey, striving to move away from traditional paper-based processes towards a more efficient and accessible digital ecosystem. While the "Digital India" campaign launched in 2014 significantly accelerated these initiatives, the groundwork for digitalization in Maharashtra began much earlier.

Maharashtra, has been actively embracing digital technologies to transform its governance structure. This document explores various initiatives undertaken by the government to move towards e-governance, aiming to improve efficiency, transparency, and accessibility of government services for citizens. The Government of Maharashtra had started the 'First Saturday Tech Saturday campaign' in the government sector to know about various tools, software related to the IT sector. (GR Ministry of General administration, Government of Maharashtra - 05th Oct. 2011)**.** The Maharashtra government takes the continuous efforts required to improve digital literacy and ensure everyone can participate in this evolving digital landscape.

II. METHODOLOGY

Primary as well as secondary sources have been used for data collection of this research article. These include government documents, government circulars, newspapers, research articles and government websites etc. has been used. Descriptive Method is used to analyze all collected information.

The use of e-mail in e-Governance
To avoid the unnecessary use of paper, the Maharashtra government issued a GR on August 4th, 2009, stating that notices or invitations for meetings and conferences organized in the Secretariat will be sent by e-mail using Lotus Notes or Intranet. This system was implemented from July 15, 2009.

E-mail can help to reduce the amount of paper used in government offices, to improve communication between government officials and citizens and also help to improve communication between different government departments.

Increasing the use of Marathi Language in e-Governance
Marathi being the official language of Maharashtra, it is used in the administration as well. It is working to develop and implement policies and initiatives that will make it easier for citizens to use Marathi language in their interactions with the government, also working to develop Marathi language software and tools.

The state government had commissioned a project for the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) to develop a standardized Marathi font. The font, named 'Yashomudra', aims to bring uniformity across all state departments. This was released on May 1st, the state's foundation day. The Government of Maharashtra has recognized the following standards: Unicode, Open Font Format, Common Locale Data Repository, Lexicon Standardization etc.

e Governance

To make the functioning of the administration digital, it is necessary for every department in the administration to implement the e-governance mechanism. To provide financial assistance for this, a provision has been made that up to half a percent of the total available budgetary provision of the department can be spent from the financial year 2010-11, according to GR, Government of Maharashtra, 18th June 2010. e Governance can make government processes more transparent and accountable to the public, help to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government services, and help to reduce the costs of government operations.

An e governance survey conducted among the 27 Municipal Corporations in Maharashtra by the Pune based organisation Policy Research Organisation. The third edition of the survey was conducted between November 1st and December 31st, 2023, while perusing factors such as accessibility of websites, mobile applications and social media handles of these corporation for citizens. Pimpri-Chinchwad, Mumbai, Kolhapur and Pune have come out on top as the first four municipal corporations in the survey.

Mahaonline

Mahaonline was established in March 2010 by a joint venture between the Government of Maharashtra and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS). Its main objective is to reduce the workload of various government departments in Maharashtra, provide better services to citizens, and make these services easily accessible to citizens from anywhere.

Mahaonline has brought about a change in the way the government works in Maharashtra. It is working to ensure the maximum use of digitization and online systems in various departments of the state. As a result, all government services are now available online. These include online recruitment, online lottery, online ticket booking for national parks, and many other facilities. This has helped to ensure equal opportunity for everyone and increase transparency in government work.

E Service Centre

The E service centre needs to be modified according to the evolving needs of the present day. The aim of e-Seva Kendra is to make it easier for citizens to access various certificates, permits, Licenses and other services and other services are being provided through Maha-E-Sevacentres. Instated of that centre operator fill up online form for the citizen and citizen could avail required service without any hurdle. Citizens are obtaining various useful documents such as Birth Certificate, 7/12 Extract, Residence Certificate, caste certificate etc. through these Maha-E-Sevacentres. They do not require to stand in a long queue or need not check repeatedly at the centre for the documents. This procedure is also save lot of time. Citizens can pay their utility bills, such as electricity bills and water bills, online. They can apply for government schemes, such as scholarships and pensions, online.

m-Governance

m Governance in Maharashtra refers to the use of mobile technology to deliver government services to citizens. The state has been actively promoting m governance initiatives since 2011, with the aim of improving accessibility, transparency and efficiency of government services. Developing user friendly and convenient mobile apps for different sectors, Providing SMS-based services, setting up a dedicated M-Governance portal -

Aaple Sarkar: This app provides citizens with information and services related to various government departments.

Mahaonline: This app provides citizens with a single point of access to all government services available online.

mParivahan: This app provides citizens with information and services related to the transport department.

mKrishi: This app provides farmers with information and services related to agriculture.

mHealth: This app provides citizens with information and services related to health.

Aadhaar Card

Aadhaar is a 12-digit unique identification number issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) on behalf of the Government of India. It is a biometric-based identification system that serves as proof of identity and address for Indian citizens.

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ISSN
2581-9429
IJARSCT

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The Aadhaar card was launched in 2009 with the aim of providing a unique identity to all Indian residents. The first Aadhaar card was issued to RanjanaSonawane of Nandurbar district in Maharashtra on September 29, 2010. According to the report of UIA of India on 31st December 2020, 93% of the citizens of Maharashtra have Aadhaar card. Opening a bank account,Applying for a PAN card, Filing income tax returns, applying for a passport, Getting a mobile phone connection, Buying a SIM card, Availing government subsidies.

Digital Literacy

The state government has launched several programs like 'MahaOnline' and 'Digital maharashtra mission' to improve digital literacy across various areas. Some organizations like SevaSahayog Foundation, NASSCOM Foundation are actively involved in training rural communities.

MS-CIT (Maharashtra State Certificate in Information Technology) is an Information Technology (IT) literacy course started by MKCL in the year 2001. MS-CIT attempts to propagate it through IT Awareness, Literacy, Functionality and Applicability among the common people with a view to bridge the Digital Divide.

The Maharashtra government is implementing the 'e-Shala' mission to encourage digital literacy in ZillaParishad schools. The Government of India had implemented two schemes between 2014 and 2016 to increase digital literacy: 'National Digital Literacy Mission' and 'Digital Literacy Abhiyan'. According to the report of these two schemes, 78 thousand people have become digitally literate in Maharashtra according to the National Digital Mission. While 55 lakh 86 thousand 975 people participated in the Digital Literacy Abhiyan, 34 lakh 42 thousand 143 people were officially declared digitally literate.

Digital literacy is a continuous process, requiring ongoing efforts from government, NGOs, communities and individuals to ensure everyone can participate in the digital age.

III. CONCLUSION

The Maharashtra government has been actively implementing various initiatives to improve e-governance within the state. These initiatives aim to make government services more accessible, transparent, and efficient for citizens. To bridge the digital divide and ensure wider participation in e-governance the government should improve digital literacy. It is necessary skills to navigate the digital landscape.

Overall, the Maharashtra government's e-governance initiatives demonstrate a commitment to improving citizen engagement and service delivery through technology and digital inclusion. While challenges remain, the state's ongoing efforts are paving the way for a more efficient and accessible government system for all.

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