



Building India for the Centennial: Digital Infrastructure as a Tool for Inclusive Governance and Democracy

Dr. M. Samuel Praveen Kumar Assistant Professor of Political Science
Pingle Government College for Women (A) Hanumakonda – Telangana.

DOI: 10.56975/ijrar.v13i1.326817

ABSTRACT

Viksit Bharat@2047 envisions India as a developed nation by 2047, with Digital India serving as a cornerstone for transformative governance and democratic deepening. This paper examines digital infrastructure—encompassing high-speed internet, e-governance platforms, and data-driven public services—as a pivotal tool for fostering inclusive governance and participatory democracy. By bridging the urban-rural digital divide, initiatives like BharatNet and UMANG empower marginalized communities, enabling real-time access to government schemes, transparent decision-making, and direct citizen feedback mechanisms. From a political science lens, Digital India reshapes state-society relations by decentralizing power through platforms such as MyGov and Digital Sansad. These tools enhance political accountability, reduce bureaucratic inefficiencies, and promote e-voting pilots that could expand electoral participation. However, challenges persist: cybersecurity threats, data privacy concerns under the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, and digital literacy gaps risk exacerbating inequalities, potentially undermining democratic equity. The paper argues that robust digital infrastructure is indispensable for Viksit Bharat's political maturity, aligning with Amrit Kaal's focus on inclusive growth. Drawing on policy frameworks like the National Digital Strategy and global comparisons (e.g., Estonia's e-governance model), it proposes a multi-stakeholder approach—integrating public-private partnerships, AI ethics regulations, and capacity-building—to mitigate risks. Ultimately, Digital India's success will determine whether India achieves not just economic development but a resilient, citizen-centric democracy by 2047, redefining sovereignty in the digital age.

Keywords: Digital India, e-governance, urban-rural digital divide, e-voting, inclusive growth.

Introduction

India's vision of Viksit Bharat@2047 aims to transform the nation into a developed economy by its 100th year of independence, emphasizing inclusive growth, technological advancement, and robust democratic institutions. Central to this vision is Digital India, launched in 2015, which builds digital infrastructure like BharatNet for broadband connectivity, Aadhaar for digital identity, and platforms such as UMANG and MyGov for e-governance. From a political science perspective, this infrastructure redefines governance by enabling direct citizen-state interactions, enhancing transparency, and fostering participatory democracy. This paper explores how digital tools bridge socio-economic divides, empower marginalized groups, and strengthen democratic accountability, while addressing challenges like the digital divide and cybersecurity. In the context of Amrit Kaal—the 25-year period leading to 2047—digital infrastructure emerges as a catalyst for political empowerment and equitable development.

Aims and Objectives

The primary aim is to analyze digital infrastructure's role in promoting inclusive governance and democracy under Viksit Bharat@2047.

Specific objectives include:

1. To evaluate key Digital India initiatives like BharatNet, UPI, and DigiLocker in enhancing political participation and service delivery.
2. To assess their impact on state-society relations, decentralization, and accountability.
3. To identify barriers such as digital literacy gaps and data privacy issues.
4. To propose policy recommendations for sustainable, inclusive digital governance.

Review of Literature

Scholarly works highlight Digital India's transformative potential.

1. PwC's report on Digital India underscores its role in inclusive growth through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) and rural connectivity, noting how Aadhaar reduces leakages in welfare schemes by 20-30%.
2. Nandan Nilekani's insights on Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) emphasize open protocols for equitable access, positioning India as a global model akin to Estonia's e-governance.
3. IBEF analyses platforms like Co-WIN and BHASHINI for breaking language barriers and boosting GDP by up to \$1 trillion by 2030.
4. PIB documents highlight skill-building and advanced tech like quantum computing for citizen empowerment. Critiques, however, point to the digital divide: rural internet penetration lags at 40% versus 70% urban, risking exclusion.

Literature gaps exist in political science applications, particularly long-term democratic impacts by 2047, which this study addresses through a governance lens.

Relevance of the Study

This research holds significance for political science amid India's democratic evolution. Viksit Bharat@2047 prioritizes technology-driven reforms, making digital infrastructure vital for inclusive governance. It addresses how e-platforms like MyGov (with 10 crore+ users) enable citizen feedback, reducing elite capture in policy-making. For policymakers, it offers insights into mitigating risks under the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (2023). Academically, it bridges policy studies and digital politics, relevant for national seminars on Amrit Kaal. Practically, it aids states in replicating successes like Andhra Pradesh's e-Pragati for statewide enterprise architecture. In a polarized polity, strengthening digital democracy counters misinformation and enhances electoral integrity via e-voting pilots.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative doctrinal approach, drawing on secondary sources: government reports (PIB, MeitY), policy documents (Digital India Strategy), academic journals, and case studies (e.g., UPI's 13 billion monthly transactions). Comparative analysis with Estonia evaluates best practices. Content analysis of platforms like Digital Sansad assesses inclusivity metrics. No primary data collection was undertaken, focusing on synthesis for policy-oriented insights.

Findings

Digital infrastructure has revolutionized governance. BharatNet connected 2.5 lakh gram panchayats, enabling rural access to schemes via UMANG, which integrates 1,200+ services.□ UPI's interoperability empowered 500 million users, including unbanked populations, fostering financial inclusion as a democratic enabler.□ MyGov and Digital Sansad platforms democratize participation: during COVID-19, Co-WIN vaccinated 2.2 billion doses transparently.□ Politically, these tools decentralize power—DBT saved ₹2.3 lakh crore by eliminating ghosts beneficiaries, enhancing trust in state institutions.

Global benchmarks show India's DPI stack (Aadhaar-UPI-Account Aggregator) serves 1.4 billion people, outperforming peers. Yet, challenges undermine inclusivity. The digital divide persists: only 52% rural households have internet (2025 TRAI data), excluding women and SC/ST communities. Cybersecurity breaches rose 15% annually, threatening data sovereignty. Digital literacy hovers at 30% nationally, per MeitY, limiting participation. Privacy concerns under DPDP Act remain unaddressed, with surveillance fears eroding civil liberties. Pilots like e-voting face scalability issues due to exclusion errors. Overall, while digital tools advance Viksit Bharat, uneven implementation risks deepening inequalities, necessitating targeted reforms.

Suggestions

To harness digital infrastructure for Viksit Bharat: Accelerate digital literacy via 10,000 new Common Service Centres (CSCs) targeting women and rural youth. Enforce AI ethics and cybersecurity through a National Digital Security Authority. Mandate multilingual interfaces (BHASHINI expansion) for linguistic inclusion. Pilot blockchain for e-voting in state elections, scaling nationally by 2030. Foster PPPs for last-mile

connectivity, subsidizing devices for marginalized groups. Integrate DPI with SDGs, monitoring via annual inclusivity indices. These measures ensure equitable democracy.

Conclusion

Digital infrastructure under Digital India is pivotal for Viksit Bharat@2047, transforming governance from opaque bureaucracy to transparent, inclusive systems. Achievements in connectivity and participation affirm its democratic potential, yet divides and risks demand urgent action. By prioritizing equity and innovation, India can realize a resilient polity where technology empowers every citizen. This vision aligns with constitutional values of justice and equality, securing a developed, democratic future by 2047.

References

1. PwC. (2017). Digital India: Targeting Inclusive Growth.
2. Nilekani, N. (2024). Governance of Digital Public Infrastructure.
3. IBEF. (2025). India's Digital Transformation Dividend.
4. PIB. (2025). Empowering Governance through Digital Infrastructure.
5. Digital India Portal. (2025). About Us.
6. Ramdhani, A. (2014). Writing a Literature Review.
7. Paré, G. (2017). Methods for Literature Reviews.
8. MeitY. (2023). National Digital Strategy. TRAI. (2025).
9. Internet Penetration Report. Government of India. (2023).
10. Digital Personal Data Protection Act. Estonia e-Governance Model. (2024).
11. Global DPI Report. Andhra Pradesh e-Pragati Initiative. (2025).
12. State Report. BHASHINI. (2025).
13. National Language Mission. Co-WIN Platform Analytics. (2023).
14. MeitY. UPI Ecosystem Report. (2025).
15. NPCI. MyGov Impact Study. (2024).
16. NITI Aayog. BharatNet Progress. (2025).
17. DoT. DBT Savings Data. (2025).
18. PIB. Amrit Kaal Vision Document. (2023).