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Research Article

The Usefulness of Digitization of Parliament Proceedings for Democracy in Bharat

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Abstract

Parliament is one of the main pillars of democracy. The entire system works more quickly while parliament is in session. In order to support democracy, digital communication technology is essential to seamless telecast of Parliament proceedings. A significant change in the democratic principles of transparency, accountability and answerability as well as public participation in the governance was observed following the implementation of digital communication technology. This research paper explores the current state of digitization in Bharat's parliamentary procedure. This paper examines the benefits, challenges, and effectiveness associated with the digital transformation of the Bhartiya Parliament.

Key Words: Parliament Proceeding, Governance, Transparency, India, E-Parliament, Citizen engagement, Digitization

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Objectives

- To evaluate how digital tools enhancing the citizen participation in the democratic process.
- To study the role of parliamentary broadcasting in connecting people to parliament
- To study the role of technology in enhancing the transparency & responsiveness of parliamentary democracy.
- To understand the challenges and limitations faced by the Bhartiya Parliament in digitizing its operation.

1. Introduction

Parliament plays a crucial role in scaling up the democracy & its value. The major function of parliament is to form laws, debates, and to identify political parties and their representatives from different constituencies across the nation; and to overlook the executive body of government. It is the forum that advocates for public

policy & strengthens the root of democracy. 1st pillar of democracy witnessing the changes occurring in the largest democracy of the world due to the adoption of advanced technology. Over the past 15 years Indian parliament has seen many technological transformations, upgrades, and use of digital media. Technology contributes to securing the temple of democracy, speeding up the function of parliament, and the use of digital media declining the role of gatekeeper between parliamentarian and their constituents. By examining the transformation of parliament in Bharat through digital tools such as live streaming of session, digitized documentation, and interactive platform for citizen engagement. this paper analyze the usefulness of digitization in strengthening the root of democracy.

2. Review of Literature

Jafarkarimi et al., (2014) E-democracy came into existence with the blend of two words, electronic and democracy. The use of information and communication technology in political and governance process is known as "digital democracy" or internet democracy. as it uses information and technology to speed up the wheel of democracy. this could incorporate government own business and private partnership. this modal of governance allows for equal participation from universal suffrage in the formulation, advancement and enactment of laws.

House of Lords, Digital Democracy (2015) emphasized that traditional forms of political participation have declined due to the evolution of the internet. Internet affects people's engagement & participation via systems such as e-petition, e-consultation, e-debates, etc. It opened a new window for citizen engagement. Though it differentiates the genre of digital democracy and E-Government.

Kumar,A.(2023). E-Sansad incorporates robust cyber security measures to safeguard sensitive information and ensure the integrity of parliamentary proceedings. Strong encryption protocols, authentication mechanisms, and multi-factor authentication systems protect against potential threats, guaranteeing the confidentiality and privacy of parliamentary data.

3. Methodology

To present this research paper data collected from secondary sources amid parliamentary democracy and the use of information technology. Along with this, information was collected through interviews of subject experts and veteran journalists who are covering parliament since decade before. This paper will illustrate how technology transforming the parliament proceeding and speeding up the wheel of democracy.

4.The Role of Digitization in Democracy

Democracy whirl on the principal of transparency, accountability, answerability and people's participation . The digitization of parliamentary process can boost these principle by offering new medium for people to engage with policymaker and remain updated about legislative business.

4.1 Transparency:-

The traditional forms of political communication and participation have declined due to the evolution of the internet. Digitization of epitome institute of democracy-Parliament makes its functioning more accessible, permit people to view live debate, discussion and Act of their representatives. formerly many people had limited access to such information due to infrastructure, geographic and economic barriers. as the Bhartiya Parliament transitions to an e-parliament, proceeding of all sessions are accessible to the general public through website and live streaming service and other digital formats. as a result, there is more scrutiny and peoples are empowered to hold their representatives accountable for their action.

4.2 Accountability:-

Digitization process opened a new window for citizen engagement as its records of parliamentary proceeding that ensures the actions of elected representatives can be easily find and reviewed. after adoption of digital communication technology legislative process is now covered by people oversight hence it reduce the scope of manipulation and corruption. Furthermore, digital tool such as mobiles apps and website, provide an effective platform for constituents to track the discussion and voting behavior of Members of parliament, raising the stakes for political representatives.

4.3 People Participation:-

Internet affects people's engagement & participation via systems such as e-petition, e-consultation, e-debates and interactive platforms etc. now people can approach parliamentarians directly and may get quick response from their media cell . undoubtedly people are becoming more active and involved in the political process since digital platforms and official governments portals allow for real- time feedback on policy issues. Though it differentiates the genre of digital democracy and E-Government.

5. The Digitization of India's Parliament Proceedings

The Bhartiya parliament comprises the president and two houses. Rajya Sabha (Upper House/ Council of State) and Lok Sabha (Lower House/ House of the People). It is the supreme legislative body of India. The first elected parliament came into existence in 1952. For a newly independent India major challenge was making people aware of the parliamentary democracy and strengthening their belief in democracy. At that juncture information technology played a very crucial role in connecting the population of more than 90 and now above 140 crore with parliament via print & broadcast media. Since the advent of numerous ICT projects in early 2000s, the Bhartiya Parliament has made significant progress in digitizing its operation. Several step have been taken to integrate in legislative function.

5.1 Computerization in Parliament

The first time Automation services were introduced in the Indian parliament in 1982 & just after its 3 years computer-based information retrieval system. The parliament is equipped with computer facilities along with multilingual software i.e. Indian Standard Font Code (ISFOC), Parliamentary Reporters Information Systems, facilities of the multilingual translator, internal watch, and word personal to PDF using various technology-based equipment & gadgets related to Internet protocol & Radio Frequency. In the same way, the Admin or HR wing uses GPS GPS-based attendance system.

5.2 Broadcasting of Parliament Proceeding

A landmark was recorded in the history of parliament coverage when on 20th December 1989 televising select parliament proceedings with the live telecast of the address by the president to the members of both the

houses of parliament. ¹First time question hour in Lok Sabha was recorded on 2nd December 1991 and aired on 3 December 1991 in the morning from 7.15 to 8.15 o'clock. In the following sequence first time the broadcast of Railway Budget, and General Budget were started on 25th February 1992 & 29th February 1992, respectively the important speeches of the Prime Minister, Leader of the opposition, and members of parliaments from other parties in Lok Sabha during the motion of thanks to the presidential address, general debate on budget & discussion on the demands for grants of various ministries were aired in capsule form. Since 18 April 1994, the entire proceeding of the Lok Sabha has been broadcasted.

5.3 First-time live broadcasting of Parliament Proceeding

Live Broadcast on Doordarshan

With the purpose of live telecast parliamentary proceeding a Lower Power Transmitter was set up & made operational in Parliament House on 25th August 1994 to make broadcast available within a range of 10-15 km from Parliament House. The live broadcast of the upper house was started on 7th December 1994 on channel bands 9 & 3 through another LPT which was installed in the parliament house. The proceeding question hours of both houses are being broadcast live on alternative week on Doordarshan from 11 o'clock to 12 o'clock noon along with the coverage of the winter session of parliament in 2003. Moreover, if the one house adjourned for any reason both channels cover the other house.

5.4 Live Broadcast on Radio

All India Radio also took the initiative to broadcast parliamentary proceeding on its national frequency from 2200 hrs.-2300hrs & same night on its national network the way Doordarshan telecasting. It has been systematized in such a sequence that during the telecast of the questionnaire of one house by DD, the question hour of the other house is telecast by AIR.

5.5 Satellite channel for the parliamentary proceeding

On 14 December 2004, two separate dedicated channels were set up by the Public broadcaster Doordarshan in coordination with the audio-visual unit for broadcasting of both houses. A big change occurred with the launching of India's first 24x7 dedicated parliamentary channel Lok Sabha TV. Lok Sabha TV was established by the then speaker Somnath Chatterjee with the aim of taking Indian parliamentary proceedings to every household. It's the only parliamentary channel that is owned & operated by parliament without commercial advertisement. So the aim of state contact was achieved. After the successful launch and big impact of Lok Sabha TV a separate channel launched for the coverage of Rajya Sabha TV in 2011.

Production manager Praveen, Sansad TV Erstwhile (Lok Sabhav) says "At the initial stage of launching, the channel was working of Standard Definition Mode which later on shifted to High Definition mode. Lok Sabha TV had its first High-definition studio. Before the launch of Sansad TV, it was working on technology which has been out of date & disappeared from the market. other channels record & edited on 100, and 50 SBPS, whereas our channel did it on 50MBPS with broadcast on the lowest Mbps, Chroma technology, studio light, ingest & play out technology was one decade old"

6. E-Parliament

The new voice of parliament emerged in the combined form of both the channels Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha as **Sansad TV on 15 September 2021**. Legislature merged both channels with the belief that it would bring synergy and economies of scale. First-time policy maker, prominent economist, and Member of Parliament appeared on screen, not as a host but as an advocator of democracy & electorate. Apart from the **Traditional Broadcasting** vertical parliamentary proceedings can be seen through **Webcasting /Live Streaming** on various platforms such as **webcast.govt.in**, the **official website of SansadTV**, etc. Streaming on government & private platforms. Another vertical of parliament broadcasting is **Video on Demand**: - in the short term VOD. Viewer can extract or fetch the video as per their request & interest from a particular/ dedicated video server of Sansad TV as well as on YouTube playlist.

6.1 Online Streaming and Archives

People may now more easily access discussion, debates and question hours in real time as the Bhartiya Parliament now streams its session live on its official website and YouTube channels. In addition all sessions are archived, allowing for easy access to historical records and previous legislative action, which is essential for research and accountability.

6.2 Social Media: - Twitter (question hour, zero hour along with the proceeding link of YouTube. YouTube (question hour, zero hour along Bill small fragmented video of house discussion) Facebook (share the link of YouTube). Sansad TV transmits data on simplex or full duplex transmission. Within its launching year, Sansad TV expanded its wing on all prominent digital media platforms, world of App with accelerating viewership with more than 86.7 million subscribers on YouTube. On Twitter, it has an organic reach of 129k followers, Facebook- 86K users, and Instagram- 242 k users. Senior engineer Surendra Paliwal says that **"now Indian citizens use 19(1) (A) in a very efficient manner with the help of digital media tools. Indian ISP (Internet service provider) provide the data a very nominal rates as compared to other country of the world.in parliament, many wings & units are connected via technology to achieving predefine goals"**.

In the past 15 years, it's seen that parliament has focused on the use of technologies to achieve the goal of paperless legislation. As a part of Digital India initiative **National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA)** was introduced with the goal of digitizing the operation of **State Legislative Assembly**, so that MP can access legislatives document, participate in debates and vote on issue electronically. This system ensures that representatives have real-time access to relevant legislative data and its enhances decision making. Senior journalist Mukesh Kaushik responds '**Technology enabler & will help wherever it applied including parliamentary works. Democracy is a system of governance that is run by the intelligence of the people of its time. Hence technology can & will empower the ability to execute the works but democracy can be constantly empowered by the enlightened approach of people.**' The new parliament building is fully equipped with digital technology, how advanced it is & will it smoothen the coverage of parliament proceedings? Regarding this question **Electrical Engineer Rajiv Kumar** shared his thoughts about new technology installed in the new parliament building to smooth the functioning of legislation "**It would be equipped with Ultra high definition 4K camera, lances & associated equipment i.e. transponder, spectrum, frequency. Though transmission is in High definition for a better experience of video-audio quality transmission will be 4k. 41 Globe robotic shutter camera of Japanese technology in both houses of parliament. 23 cameras were installed in the Lower House & 18 Cameras in the Upper House, A Multi display setup was created for all the Members of Parliament, 2 big video walls of 24*12 inches. The light system would be LED Based on the purpose of carbon-neutral functioning of parliament. The whole system is now IP based earlier it was analog based. UHD 4K compatible Technology/infrastructure has been created to see the future requirement of the media technology**". Working remotely is the new normal in the present scenario, Indian parliament has its own TV Channel with a newly designed MCR/Room 50 of approx. cost of Rs. 72 million, and a Streaming Platform for broadcast and live streams of the live proceeding of both houses. Now millions of people around the globe access & subscribe to these facilities.

Conclusion

Technology plays an indispensable role in accelerating state contact, transforming the functioning of the legislature, and racking up transparency & responsiveness of parliamentary democracy due to the wide coverage & broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings. We need to maintain this consistency to reach the constituents of all 790 constituencies. Coverage of Parliamentary proceedings/business is always considered to be boring for common people as well as by other media houses, for the private media coverage of parliamentary proceedings is not a TRP rating material or revenue-generating coverage. To strengthen the root of parliamentary democracy media should play a fair & responsible role but unfortunately,

it could not due to its Western interest. After the establishment of a dedicated parliamentary channel for broadcasting parliamentary proceeding, it was found that gradually people started taking interest in to be happening inside the house, and parliamentarians started behaving more consciously & efficiently. Earlier there was no strong bridge such as the parliament channel which helped in creating a link between legislators and citizens of the country. In the past few usage of social media increased rapidly yet need to rise the graph of digital literacy as it is only 0.08 percent only. India is now the second largest consumer of the internet. It's a golden opportunity for the Indian government to inspire the people to connect with the legislature and participate in strengthening the parliamentary democracy by direct participation. To some extent with the help of digital technology parliament closing the gap between representative & their electorate. Now debates of parliament are available in fragmented video on parliament's own & operated media platforms, other government platforms i.e. Sansad TV website, various social media platforms, traditional satellite broadcast (TV), user-friendly mobile applications (**Digital Sansad app, E-Vidhan MMP, NeVA**). Even parliamentarians are now started using mainstream applications. These applications allow both institution and individual representative to manage their activity better and in best way. For the past few years, many legislature have been using the internet, mainly via institutional websites to provide information to their constituents.

Undoubtedly impact of technology empower the connection between parliament, parliamentarian, and representative through its need to accelerate by touching the landscape of the convention community, rural constituency & youth of India. It should not be limited to only the intellectual community or aspirants of UPSC, civil services. Parliament works for the welfare of every citizen of India.

Suggestions

Need to **expand digital literacy rate** particularly in rural areas, to ensures that all citizens can access and participate with digital parliamentary tool. It is seen that technology connect the parliamentarian and constituents via various media platform but still need to provide access for legislature representing village constituencies in the scarcity of device, reliable internet connection & power issue.

Promote Digital Engagement : Parliaments of the future require **digitally skilled MP and office staff**, and for that reason, we need to work on both the model of digital and non-digital affairs. in parallel manner need to encourage MP to adopt more interactive and engaging way of communication with their constituent through digital platforms.

Improve Infrastructure: need to expand internet and broadband infrastructure especially in rural and remote areas along with it need to develop facilities for future maintenance of existing infrastructure technology. SOP is required to maintain the infrastructure for a longer period of time.

cyber security measure: It's good that in the past few years, we've come a long way in terms of transforming the way parliament works with the use of technology. With technology investment, we need to be aware of its **cyber security measure** to protect sensitive parliamentary data and safeguard against cyber attack.

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