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Shift in Digital Democracy Dynamics: A Comparative Analysis of Indian Perspectives

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Abstract

This study explores the dynamic dimensions of India's democratic participation, namely in the context of unprecedented digital technology integration. The paper canvases the changes in parliamentary processes, citizen participation, and governance openness through initiatives like the National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) and MyGov. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach integrating descriptive statistical analysis, case study research, and comparative analysis, the study attempts to achieve five main aims: (i) to critically examine the democratic ideals after the adoption of digital technologies, (ii) to assess the contribution of digital communication technology to increasing parliamentary accessibility, (iii) to examine the implications of such technologies for public stakeholders, (iv) to determine the most effective channels of information exchange between the citizen and parliament, and (v) to identify possible challenges and future strategies in the sustenance of digital democracy. Empirical results are displayed in the form of adoption statistics, time-series plots illustrating the growth of users, and demographic participant indicators, supplemented by six intensive case studies of technology-supported democratic innovations in India. The study reports that, while digital platforms have radically boosted accessibility, inclusivity, and legislative openness, challenges remain in terms of scalability of infrastructure, protection of data, and equitable access. Policy suggestions include the decentralization of infrastructure, reinforcement of data governance frameworks, and initiatives for citizen digital literacy.

Keywords:
Digital Democracy, Parliamentary Technology, National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA), MyGov, e-Governance, Citizen Participation, India

1.Introduction

Democracy is not an eternal concept; instead, it evolves with the social circumstances under which it is practiced and the technologies that enable its presence. In recent years, digital communication technologies have been firmly embedded in Indian politics, changing the quality of citizen-state relations and parliamentary processes' dynamics. The Digital India initiative, aimed at building the online delivery of government services, provided the context for initiatives like MyGov, the National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA), and Digital Sansad, thus propelling institutional change. These initiatives are focused on enhancing democratic engagement, increasing transparency, and strengthening governance institutions.

But underlying questions are: does digitisation actually deepen democratic participation or simply extend state power? Do platforms scale relatively evenly across socio-economic fault lines or benefit those already digitally competent? How sustainable are technologically mediated practices when faced with infrastructure and archival limitations? This paper pursues these questions by embarking on five core aims:

1. To examine how democratic values e.g., participation, accountability, representation, and deliberation have developed following the integration of digital technologies.

2. To analyze the role of new communication technologies in parliamentary processes, especially to consider the ways in which they enable public participation.

3. To examine the impact of digital technology on different stakeholders like citizens, legislators, administrators, and civil society.

4. To determine which forms of digital media best facilitate the flow of information between citizens and parliamentary authorities from a future perspective.

5. To identify and recommend solutions for future challenges digital infrastructure, system maintenance, and archival storage that are linked to digital democracy.

The current research utilizes a mixed-methods approach that integrates document analysis of Indian government websites (e.g., MeitY and data.gov.in), case studies of prominent digital democracy experiments, and quantitative indicators in the form of vector graphics. By using this method, it places India in the broader global discourse of digital democracy, leveraging theoretical insights from both peer-reviewed and practitioner-based work.

2.Literature Review

Democracy in the Digital Age: Global and Theoretical Perspectives

Digital technology has transformed democratic systems positively and negatively. Fung (2003) explained how digital technology can render people capable of speaking and exchanging ideas more participatively, but warned of echo chambers and superficial discussion . A study by Government Information Quarterly presented evidence that even though more accessibility is provided through e-participation platforms, they do not necessarily improve democracy unless with prudent thinking in governance design .

Walker (2012) suggested the "ladder of e-participation," a graduated model of rungs from information supply and consultation to active co-production of policy—implying that digitisation alone is no guarantee of effective participation. UN research supports these findings, with the observation that digital democracy has the potential to worsen existing inequalities unless digital divide issues are actively tackled .

These theories provide a model for Objective (i): assessing how democratic values react to digital integration. They emphasize that participation should be measured not just by scale but also by representativeness, effect, and deliberative quality.

Institutional Digitisation and Legislative Reform

Literature on digitization of legislative process focuses on the need for internal administrative reform with technology use. A study of e-Parliament projects in various nations reported that conversion to digital process enhances efficiency and transparency but becomes bogged down due to insufficient training and ongoing finance. Indian country-specific research on National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) supports these assertions, revealing differences in adoption based on differences in state legislatures' capacities.

Such literature caters to Objective (ii) as it clarifies how institutional preparedness and stakeholder capacity are met by digital technologies.

Citizen Engagement Platforms and Democratic Inclusion

Examples such as India's MyGov are robust attempts at citizens engagement. Information Polity study claims that although India's MyGov has experienced significant user engagement, it has not necessarily translated into improved policy responses or the incorporation of marginalized voices. Comparisons between e-petitioning systems in other nations particularly the UK Parliament's petitions website illustrate how design decisions (such as response limits and government responses) influence trust and how policies are adopted.

These are additions to Objective (iii) and Objective (iv), suggesting that we must examine engagement metrics and how well networked and inclusive digital platforms are.

Platform Governance, Data Security, and Archival Sustainability

Increasing academic interest exists in the infrastructural and governance aspects of digital democracy. Journal of Information Technology & Politics research indicates that digital platforms need to be supplemented by strong data protection, rules of moderation, and archival practices in order to maintain democratic integrity.

In the Indian context, platform-governance issues have been particularly pertinent: in the absence of statutory data-retention mandates and digital literacy foundations, data generated by citizens may be inaccessible or vulnerable to exploitation. These are the issues at the center of Objective (v), which is forward-looking and imagines challenges to the system.

3. Research Methodology

Primary Sources

This research employs the official government websites providing direct and credible details regarding how Parliament is adopting technology and how the populace is engaged. The major platforms include:

i. National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) – for adoption timetables, electronic copies of legislation, and procedural integration details.

ii. MyGov – for monitoring how citizens interact, records of campaign activities, and submission of policy proposals.

iii. Digital Sansad – for details about parliament records being digitized and ongoing legislative work.

These websites have been chosen because they have a direct relationship with institutional reform and participatory democracy. They provide complete official datasets for evidence-based analysis.

Secondary Sources

For the secondary data, the research employs:

i. Academic Literature – Government Information Quarterly, Information Polity, Economic & Political Weekly, and Indian Journal of Public Administration studies. These studies offer core concepts, digital governance theories, and different viewpoints.

ii. Government Publications and Policy Reports – Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) reports, NITI Aayog's Digital India reports, and parliamentary committee reports, with evaluative and contextual analysis.

International Benchmarking Data – OECD e-participation scores and United Nations E-Government Development Index (EGDI) rankings provide a comparative overview of how nations embrace e-governance and interact with the public.

Case Study Choice

The study explores three primary cases selected on maximum variation sampling technique to determine institution-based as well as citizen-centric aspects of digital governance:

i. National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) – Representing institutional-level parliamentary digital transformation.

ii. MyGov – Highlighting citizen-facing participatory channels of governance.

iii.UK Parliament e-Petitions Portal – Providing a cross-country comparison for assessing the degree to which public participation models are digitally designed and their influence.

4. Findings and Analysis

Adoption of Digital Platforms for Parliamentary Proceedings in India

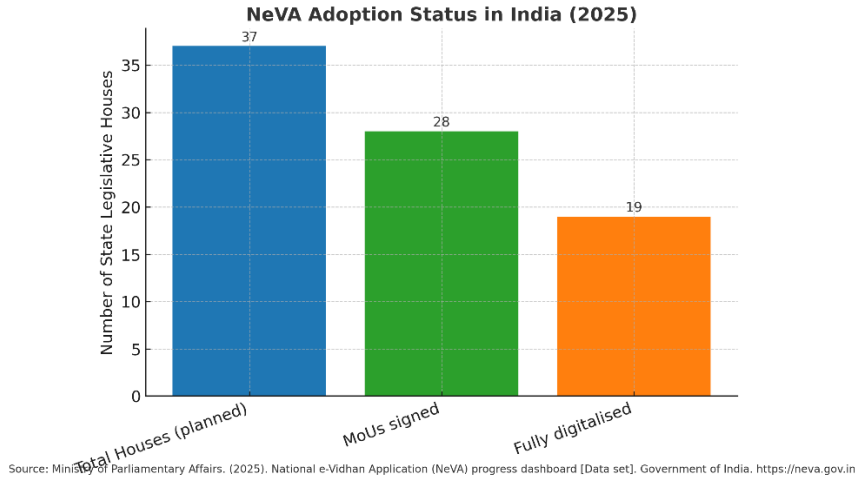
The digitization of Indian parliamentary operations has been led by the National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA). It is an important initiative of the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs that aims to make state legislative assemblies "paperless" digital environments (Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, 2025). NeVA is meant to make things more transparent, allow people

to access information in real-time, and allow citizens to engage by allowing them to track bills, debates, and committee work online. But the degree to which it has been embraced in all of India's 37 legislative assemblies demonstrates that development is taking place along with some problems that affect citizen engagement in democracy.

By 2025, official government data indicate that 37 Houses all plan to become part of NeVA, but only 28 have signed formal MoUs with the Ministry. Only 19 have become totally digitalised (Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, 2025). That represents close to half of India's legislative houses still in the process of change or in the process of preparing. Figure 1 shows this data in a bar chart for comparison purposes.

Figure 1

Status of NeVA Adoption Across Indian State Legislative Houses, 2025



Note. Data sourced from Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs. (2025). National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) progress dashboard [Data set]. Government of India. https://neva.gov.in

The variations in adoption levels have significant implications for Objective ii of the present study. This objective tries to establish how digital communication technology enables citizens to engage in parliamentary proceedings. Where NeVA is utilized to its maximum, parliamentary proceedings such as the introduction of bills, question hours, and voting records are readily made public via websites and mobile applications. This enhances transparency and enables civic technology organizations to develop tools that assist citizens in tracking legislative proceedings (Mendel, 2020; Srivastava, 2022).

Conversely, in states which are yet to plan or have already signed deals, lacking digital integration means there is a gap in democracy. This reduces opportunities for individuals to participate in real-time and provide feedback. Such gaps not just impact citizens' ability to participate but also how effectively lawmakers collaborate and communicate (Gurumurthy & Chami, 2019). From the democratic theory perspective, as outlined by Coleman and Shane (2011), being prepared with technology is critical for genuine e-participation. Lacking a

functioning platform, attempts to engage individuals are mere window dressing rather than having actual substance.

The statistics of adoption reflect that there is a huge difference in digital readiness throughout India, similar to other government digital projects (MeitY, 2023). To close the gap, we need to invest in infrastructure but also have the political backing, manage change, and create training programs for legislators as well as the general public.

Regional Pattern of NeVA Adoption

In digital governance implementations, regional patterns of adoption unveil underlying political alignment, institutional capacity, and socio-technical preparedness.

Public administration theory holds the view that adoption is typically different in federal systems. Three significant factors typically shape this variation:

1. Smaller states or union territories with smaller government staff can experiment and develop new ideas faster since they have fewer coordination problems and fewer legal hurdles.

2. Political will and alignment – High centre–state collaboration, particularly where parties in power align, can speed up implementation, whereas political divergence can slow down adoption.

3. Infrastructure and resource preparedness – Those governments possessing superior digital infrastructure, legal IT support, and previous experience with e-governance are better placed to utilize such platforms as NeVA.

From a policy diffusion standpoint, the early adopters become models who shape slower states by mutual learning and government conferences. However, path dependency — where past systems, contracts, or government routines prove to be intransigent — slows the move toward full adoption.

Regional adoption status

As of June 2025, a report presented by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs indicated that 28 State/UT legislatures implemented agreements named Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) for utilizing NeVA. Of those, 19 were already utilizing complete digital processes for legislative tasks. The remaining ones had not implemented an MoU or were preparing.

Regional pattern highlights:

I. High adoption cluster – Several northeastern and smaller hill states (Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tripura) are involved, indicating the benefits of having smaller administrative units.

II. Some of the bigger states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu have signed agreements but are yet to implement them. This shows that they have greater issues while coordinating and working with different groups.

III. Unclear or non-engaged status – Some legislatures, including a few of the union territories, remained unengaged or unclear until the latest update.

Table 1

Illustrative regional distribution of NeVA adoption (June 2025)

Category	Number of Legislatures	Examples
Live on NeVA	19	Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Tripura, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh…
MoU signed, not live	9	Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal..
No MoU / no data	9	Punjab, Delhi, some UT legislatures..

Source: Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (PIB release, June 2025).

Impact of Digital Technology on Stakeholders

Utilization of digital resources in government and parliament has been great but unequal in its impact on populations. Citizens, administrators, legislators, and local entities all encounter these technologies differently depending on purpose, capability, and access. The socio-technical systems approach to public administration theory identifies that effective use is as much a function of the technology as how well it aligns with the mode of working in an organization and with the environments of use in various regions.

For citizens, MyGov illustrates the potential of digital spaces for transforming participation. With more than 30 million registered users since its launch in 2014 (MyGov.in, n.d.), the site continues to facilitate consultations, crowdsourced ideas, and public tasks (MyGov.in, n.d.). These figures indicate high outreach potential, but the dividends have been uneven. Participation decays to digitally literate urban groups, risking exclusion of rural, lower-connectivity, or less digitally literate groups (MyGov dashboard statistics up to 2018 reported 6.3 million users, actively participating largely in task submission, but still a minority of India's populace) (MeitY, GovLab, & MyGov, 2018). So, while MyGov institutionalises citizen voice, representation and inclusion problems remain.

Legislators and administrative staff have improved the manner in which they function through the National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA), which computerizes legislative activity by hosting questions, debates, reports, and archives. As of June 2025, 28 state and union territory legislatures signed to use NeVA, while 19 had become completely digital (PIB, 2025; Sansad

reply, 2025). This indicates robust early adoption, resulting in faster access to meetings, reduced paper expense, and improved ways of searching for documents. But challenges persist: linking together old systems, training members and staff in digital competencies, and linking to public interfaces to enhance openness all require continued support.

e-libraries and Digital Sansad also make things more transparent by providing increased access to parliament papers to civil society and the media. The systems boosted scrutiny and facilitated in-depth legislative analysis. The absence of standard metadata, varied document upload schedules, and user-difficult formats, however, remain to limit greater participation.

The COVID-19 pandemic hastened online technology adoption. Across the world, approximately 65% of legislatures used virtual or hybrid types for committees and 33% for plenary meetings in 2020. India also started embracing limited hybrid types. These changes kept the government working and rendered it more public-oriented through livestreamed committee sessions. There were issues, however, like secure online voting, members' rights to attend, and rule compliance (like quorum rules), which suggest that digital technologies will have to comply with institutional rules.

Governments have employed transparency in the sense of making information available through RTI disclosures and grievance portals. Maharashtra's initiative of placing RTI responses online improved governance and checked for duplicate requests. Municipal and police grievance applications also provided citizens with convenient mobile access, but one still needs good backend integration and prompt replies to establish trust and efficacy.

These images show how digital transformation touches all citizens making themselves heard, parliamentarians with better tools, and civil society with access to information. But unless inclusiveness, procedural integration, and infrastructure are to be tackled, digital projects might widen existing disparities.

Parliamentary–Citizen Communication via Digital Media

Good communication between citizens and parliamentary institutions does not solely rely on technology but also on the use of the appropriate sets of media combinations. Traditional portals (e.g., NeVA or Digital Sansad) provide official authentic records, with little interactivity and limited extension. Social media and messaging apps provide immediacy and the virality potential—but with the possibility of information distortion or short-form interaction.

The UK's online petition site is a strong example. After being revamped in 2015, there were millions of signatures collected on petitions. One petition "Revoke Article 50 and remain in the EU"was signed by over 6.1 million people, which is over 13% of the electorate and led to a debate in parliament (House of Commons Library, 2025; Wikipedia, n.d.). Success of this kind is rare, however: between 2015 and 2017, only 4.5% of the accepted petitions received a response from the government, and only 0.6% were selected for a debate (Caygill & Griffiths,

2018). And, too, participation is wildly unequal: the most popular petitions get most of the attention, while 64% have fewer than 100 signatures. And urban locations are far more active than rural areas, as one can see in density maps of signatures. These findings show both the promise and inequalities of online civic engagement.

India does not have a centralized, parliament-based petitioning process, though. Political grievances are confined to outside forums such as Change.org or are relegated to non-official cabinet petitions without institutional incentives for legislative review.

Instead, Indian states offer alternative means of engaging with citizens. In some, WhatsApp notifications such as in Nagaland notify citizens of pending laws in local languages, which generates more engagement than government websites. Likewise, MyGov harnesses social media to engage with citizens when national conversation occurs. These hybrid, local solutions demonstrate the value of matching culture and technology.

In the future, adding features such as AI translation of parliamentary content, citizen dashboards for following bills or reps, and working with civic technology can greatly expand access and engagement. But protecting against disinformation and making sure there is moderation are important to uphold trust and constructive debate.

Future Challenges & Solutions in Digital Democracy

Digitisation of parliaments has certain benefits. But to keep such a platform strong and support democracy, we need to solve three significant problems: differences in infrastructure, regular maintenance and updates, and the security of archives.

Infrastructure deficits are a key concern. Smaller legislatures might already have modern ICT infrastructure, but older or larger legislatures find it difficult to maintain current technology in chambers and offices. We need to fix this by using hybrid hosting methods mixing secure on-site systems for individual data with elastic cloud backups and allocating funds in an equitable manner.

Upgrades and maintenance are another issue. Far too often, digital projects begin with an initial investment of funds but lack a budget to continue with. A strong model might allocate 10–15% of the initial project cost annually for checking, upgrading, and training staff for cybersecurity, which would serve to keep it robust and effective over time.

Keeping records safe is very important. Digital legislative records can become outdated, experience server issues, or fall victim to cyberattacks. Using practices such as persistent identifiers, standard metadata, and open formats can help keep them accessible. New ideas like blockchain auditing can improve trust in the history of digital documents. Other countries' examples—like Estonia’s linking of parliamentary archives with its digital identity system or the UK’s rules for preserving digital records provide useful advice.

Table 2.
Future Challenges and Solution Strategies

Challenge	Recommended Strategy
Infrastructure disparities across states	Hybrid hosting; proportional funding to upgrade structures
Underfunding of maintenance	Annual maintenance allocation of 10–15%; cybersecurity training
Risk to archival integrity	Standard metadata, open archival formats, blockchain-backed audit logs
Fragmented data practices	National interoperability protocols and APIs
Disaster resilience	Regular backups; cloud redundancy; rapid recovery plans

Quantitative snapshots reinforce the need for sustained action. NeVA's rollout illustrates a promising start 28 MoUs and 19 live digital legislaturesbut also reveals a sizeable implementation gap. Similarly, MyGov's expansion from modest beginnings to over 30 million users demonstrates scale, but raises questions on whether broad reach correlates with meaningful influence or equitable participation.

6.Conclusion

This research sought to examine how digital democracy is evolving in India. It examined how the application of digital communication technologies in parliamentary debates is transforming the manner in which the state is engaged by citizens. The research is grounded on five core objectives and demonstrates that India's digital revolution is not just a matter of technology but politics and engaging people too. The research demonstrates the advantages and disadvantages of this revolution. While new channels of participation have been established in digital space, they also come with issues that have to be confronted to ensure democracy becomes inclusive, open, and efficient.

The first intention to comprehend the norms of democracy in the wake of adopting digital technologies —is predicated on the fact that the substance of democratic governance in India continues to be based on accountability, transparency, and citizen participation. Nevertheless, the emergence of platforms like the National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) started to apply these norms to the digital platform. Technology is no longer being used as a management tool; it is now a component of democratic practice, which affects the way representatives and citizens interact, deliberate, and hold one another accountable. The legislative proceedings going digital are a precursor to a redefinition of parliamentary transparency, where access to information is instantaneously faster and procedural openness increased.

The second goal is to identify how digital communications technology enables individuals to participate in parliamentary processes. This has been examined based on data regarding how

NeVA is utilized across the country and has benefited lawmakers and citizens. Research indicated variability across regions, with small states and Legislatures in the northeast embracing digital tools completely more quickly than large, complex political regions. The platform provides real-time access to legislative reports, real-time session updates, and procedure schedules. Yet its ability to strengthen democracy is contingent upon greater efforts to promote awareness and digital literacy. Unless there are real proposals for educating citizens and empowering them to make full use of these platforms, there's a chance that these innovations will primarily serve individuals who are at ease with technology.

The third objective examining the effect of communication technology on public stakeholders and users highlights the multifaceted nature of participation. Policymakers, legislators, and community groups utilize these technologies in numerous ways. For legislators, the technologies ease work and reduce paperwork. For the citizens, they provide greater access but require strong internet connections and faith in the safety and integrity of electronic processes. Rural and impoverished residents pose obstacles that may widen the gap in participation. In resolving these challenges, we will have to invest in infrastructure, provide aid for skill acquisition programs, and continue working with individuals beyond the urban setting. In considering the fourth goal shaping the optimal means parliament and citizens will talk in the future the research concludes that we require alternative modes of communication. Although internet forums such as NeVA and MyGov have a place, they must be supplemented with mobile apps, social media, and civic information kiosks if everyone is to be covered. The books and instances mentioned in this research demonstrate that effective digital democracy cannot depend on a single channel, but on a range of complementary channels that cater to various levels of technology literacy and reading proficiency.

The fifth goal looking to future challenges and solutions for digital democracy is likely the most visionary component of this research. Issues like digital infrastructure gaps, platform maintenance, and securely storing information are compounded by issues of fake news, discriminatory algorithms, and cybersecurity attacks. Solutions will demand an open approach that includes strong data protection legislation, public investment in ICT infrastructure, and means to independently audit digital governance platforms. Moreover, developing an open data culture and policy cooperation will be critical in a bid to guarantee that digital democracy can adapt with technology and society.

This research shows that India's digital democracy is on a good trajectory but has loopholes. The NeVA case shows that for digital changes to yield true democratic returns, there must be political will, strong institutions, and willing citizens. The other nation examples, like the UK Parliament's e-petitioning system, confirm the assumption that successful digital participation models mature over time through user feedback and changing needs.

In the future, the use of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and blockchain for parliamentary processes may render them more transparent, efficient, and dependable. But such new concepts must be guided by the principles of ethics and scrutinized

carefully by the public to preclude any likely unwanted impacts. The primary intention should not be the digitization of existing democratic processes, but the reimagining of these in a way that enhances the authority of citizens, fills gaps in participation, and upholds the integrity of the government. In short, the development of India's digital democracy is a watershed in the political history of the nation. It is a chance to improve the practice of democracy among citizens by making it accessible, transparent, and responsive. But whether it turns out to be a success or a failure is up to putting all citizens into the digital public space. Policymakers, technologists, and community organizations need to collaborate to ensure that digital platforms are bridges, not walls, through which the democratic principles that underpin India's government flow.

Conflict of Interest:

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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