Chapter 5

A Qualitative Study of E–Governance in Coimbatore Revenue Administration with Special Reference to "Tamil Nilam" and "Star" Projects in Tamilnadu, India

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ABSTRACT

Land revenue constitutes a major part of revenue for any state government in India. Land administration is one of the most crucial functions of any government, and land records make the foundation of land administration. For decades, maintenance of land records has been one of the most notorious areas of governance in the country in terms of efficacy and transparency. In recent years, with the advent of Internet and newer Information Technology applications, many e-governance initiatives have been implemented at the national and state level to facilitate one on one communication link between the government bureaucracy and the citizenry. Two such projects, Land Record Computerization Project and Computerization of Property Registration, that have totally revamped the land administration system in India, have been taken for analysis in the present study. The author has taken both the projects for analysis as for completion of any land transaction in India both these projects need to function in synchronization. These projects could be called as the first e-governance initiatives in the country that

involved grass-root citizenry. The present study traces the implementation and inter-operability status of the land administration projects in Tamilnadu, India.

The study reveals that though the revenue earned by the projects grow every year, the awareness level of the projects remain relatively low. Findings also suggest that the land record data available in the website are obsolete, and to bring in more efficiency, the portal has to be constantly updated. Also, since there is no integration and interoperability between the revenue and registration department of the state, there is only sub-optimal utilization of the established infrastructure at present. The study recommends immediate integration of the projects to make it more effective.

INTRODUCTION

India, located in South Asia, is one of the oldest civilizations in the world with a kaleidoscopic variety and rich cultural heritage. It has achieved all-round socio-economic progress during the last 62 years of its Independence. It has become self-sufficient in agricultural production and is now one of the top industrialized countries and the second most populous nation in the world. English is the major language of trade and politics, but there are fourteen official languages in the nation. The country is divided into 29 states and 7 Union territories for administrative convenience. The central government is the federal institution of governance but the states elect their own provincial government with a chief minister at its helm to run the state administration (Indian Government portal, 2010).

Fragmentation of land is widespread in India and this fragmented nature of land holdings play a major role in decreased levels of agricultural productivity (Jha, 2005). Despite recent, rapid economic growth in India, the country still has the planet's largest concentration of poor people (defined as those living on less than $2 per day). Approximately 70% of Indians exist on less than $2 a day, a higher proportion than in Africa (Hanstad and Nielsen 2009). The two statistics are closely related as landlessness is the best indicator of rural poverty (World Bank, 2007). Civil courts are clogged by land disputes and 8 million of the 20 million pending civil cases in India as of the

year 2000 pertained to land litigations in India. Most of the civil cases drag on for several years (RTI India, 2007). A study on land reforms in India remarked that land disputes affected 28% of all plots in peri-urban environments in the state of Andhra Pradesh (Deininger, 2007). Statistics have also revealed that 90% of land holdings in India are subjected to ownership disputes and the money spent in contesting law suits at judicial institutions constituted around 1.3% loss of Gross Domestic Product growth every year (Indian Brand Equity foundation, 2004).

"Land" is listed as a state subject under the constitution of India and hence land and related issues are governed by state (provincial) laws and regulations. Land revenues constitute the major part of income for any state government. For decades, maintenance of land records has been one of the most notorious areas of governance in terms of efficacy and transparency (Second Administrative reforms Commission, 2008). A study has identified that Indians paid substantial bribes to access 11 public service facilities and land administration department was one of the most corrupt public administration departments in India (India Corruption Study, 2005). It was often very difficult to get a certified copy of the land title deed (Record of Rights copy) from the village accountant (government employed distributor of land documents within a rural locality), which was very necessary for the farmer to avail bank loan to buy seeds and fertilizers.

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