Digital Futures of South Asia:
Intersecting Governance and Politics

Department of Public Administration
Presidency University, Kolkata
cordially invites you to an **Academic Talk**

Scan QR to Register



Dr. Samir Sharma

Assistant Professor and Head
Department of Political Science
St. Joseph's College, North Point, Darjeeling

Non-Resident Associate Fellow,
Centre of Excellence for Himalayan Studies
SNU Delhi (2025-26)

Co-editor, Himalayan Youth Series

Associate Fellow
Centre for Multilevel Federalism,
Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi

Date: 25 November 2026

Time: 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Venue: 3rd Campus, Dowhill, Kurseong

Title: Digital futures of South Asia: Intersecting governance and politics

Abstract: Over the past decade, South Asian states have increasingly framed digital transformation as a central pillar of socio-economic development, state modernization, and public service delivery. Through flagship national policies—including "Digital India," the "Digital Nepal Framework," Bhutan's "Digital Drukyul" initiative, and Bangladesh's "Digital Bangladesh" (and subsequent Smart Bangladesh) vision—governments across the Eastern Himalayan and Bay of Bengal sub-region have rapidly expanded digital public infrastructure (DPI), biometric identification, and e-governance platforms. However, treating digital transformation merely as a neutral, technocratic project obscures the complex political contestations reshaping state-citizen relations. This study offers a comparative analysis of the emerging digital futures of India, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh by examining the critical intersection of **digital governance** and **digital politics**.

Drawing on a comparative policy framework and discourse analysis of national ICT legislation, platform regulations, and civic engagement, the paper investigates two interrelated dynamics. First, it evaluates how varying state capacities, federal versus unitary institutional structures, and developmental priorities shape the implementation and inclusivity of digital public goods—highlighting tensions between administrative efficiency and persistent structural divides in connectivity, linguistic access, and algorithmic accountability. Second, it interrogates the rise of "digital politics" across these four neighbors, exploring how social media ecosystems, cross-border digital networks, and grassroots mobilization simultaneously enable novel forms of democratic participation and provoke heightened state anxieties.

By juxtaposing India's large-scale DPI model, Bangladesh's state-led digitization and regulatory tightening, Nepal's nascent platform governance amid federal transition, and Bhutan's state-guided, Gross National Happiness-aligned digital leapfrogging, this paper demonstrates that South Asia's digital trajectories are neither uniform nor deterministic. Ultimately, the study argues that sustainable and equitable digital futures in the region depend on balancing technological innovation with robust data protection, digital rights, and democratic accountability.

Keywords: Digital Governance, Digital Politics, South Asia, Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), State-Citizen Relations, Comparative Policy, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh