

EMPOWERING CITIZENS THROUGH DIGITAL INDIA:AN OVERVIEW

DR G.Narsimulu

*ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, GDCW(A)BEGUMPET,
HYDERABAD-TS, 500016*

ABSTRACT

Digital India is a campaign launched by the Government of India to ensure that the Government's services are made available to citizens electronically through improved online infrastructure and by increasing Internet connectivity or making the country digitally empowered in the field of technology. The initiative includes plans to connect rural areas with high-speed internet networks. It consists of three core components: the development of secure and stable digital infrastructure, delivering government services digitally, and universal digital literacy. Launched on 1 July 2015, by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, it is both enabler and beneficiary of other key Government of India schemes, such as Bharat Net, Make in India, Startup India, Stand up India, industrial corridors, Bharat Mala and Sagar Mala.

Digital India has 3 core components: -

1. Delivering Government Services Digitally
2. Universal Digital Literacy
3. Development of Secure and Stable Digital Infrastructure

Digital technologies including mobile applications and cloud computing are considered as catalysts for rapid growth of a nation's economy and empowering citizens across the globe. These technologies are used by us daily, from government offices to retail stores. They help us to share information on concerns or issues faced by us and connect us with each other. Technology giants from all over the world paid attention to the Digital India campaign and are readily and happily supporting the initiative. Even Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook, had changed his profile picture to support Digital India. He started a trend on Facebook and promised to get the Wi-Fi Hotspots in rural India working. Google started on its commitment to providing broadband connectivity at 500 railway stations in India. Microsoft agreed on providing broadband connectivity to 5,00,000 villages in the country. Microsoft is also making India its cloud hub via the Indian data centres. Oracle planned on investing in 20 states to work on Smart City initiatives and Paymentech. A digitally connected India is aimed at the growth of the social and economic status of the masses in the country. The development of non-agricultural economic activities could pave the path for such an achievement, for providing access to financial services, health, and education. Information and Communication Technology alone cannot directly impact the overall development of a country. Basic digital infrastructure could help achieve overall development. Last but not the least, the paper also discusses the policies and initiatives of Digital India to empower the Citizens .

KEYWORDS: Digital India, Startup India, Digital Infrastructure, Nations Economy, Digital Literacy.

INTRODUCTION

The Indian Government launched the Digital India campaign to make government services available to citizens electronically by online infrastructure improvement and also by enhancing internet connectivity. It also aims to empower the country digitally in the domain of technology. Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the campaign on 1st July 2015.

Digital India was an initiative taken by the Government of India for providing high-speed internet networks to rural areas. Digital India Mission was launched by PM Narendra Modi on 1st July 2015 as a beneficiary to other government schemes including Make in India, Bharat Mala, Sagar Mala, Startup India, Bharat Net, and Stand-up India.

The Digital India Mission is primarily concerned with three issues:

- To provide digital facilities as a helpful resource for all citizens.
- On-demand governance and services
- To ensure that every citizen has access to the internet.
- Digital India was founded to promote inclusive growth in e-services, commodities, manufacturing, and job creation.

Three primary vision areas are at the heart of the Digital India initiative:

1. Every Citizen's Digital Infrastructure as a Fundamental Utility

- High-speed internet access is an essential utility for delivering services to citizens.
- Every citizen has an online signature that is distinctive, permanent, online, and authenticable from birth to death.
- Citizen participation in the digital and financial world is enabled through a mobile phone and a bank account.
- Accessibility to a Public Service Centre is simple.
- On a public cloud, a private space that can be shared.
- Cyberspace is safe and secure.

1. On-Demand Governance and Services

- Services that are seamlessly linked across agencies or jurisdictions.
- Real-time access to services via web and mobile platforms.
- All citizen entitlements must be portable and cloud based.
- Services that have been digitally altered to make doing business easier.
- Financial transactions are becoming more computerised and cashless.
- Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) are being used to support decision-making and development.

1. Citizens' Digital Empowerment

- Digital literacy should be universal.
- Digital resources that is available to everyone.
- Digital materials and services in Indian languages are available.
- Participatory governance through collaborative digital platforms.
- Citizens are not needed to produce government paperwork or certifications in person.

Digital India was created with a vision of making inclusive growth in areas of products, manufacturing, electronic services, and job opportunities. The main objective of the Digital India Mission is 'Power to Empower'.

Digital India aims to provide the much needed thrust to the nine pillars of growth areas. Each of these areas is a complex programme in itself and cuts across multiple Ministries and Departments. The nine pillars of Digital India are given below:

- **Broadband Highways**– This covers three sub components, namely Broadband for All – Rural, Broadband for All – Urban and National Information Infrastructure (NII).

- **Universal Access to Mobile Connectivity-** This initiative focuses on network penetration and filling the gaps in connectivity in the country.
- **Public Internet Access Programme-** The two sub components of Public Internet Access Programme are Common Services Centres (CSCs) and Post Offices as multi-service centres.
- **e-Governance: Reforming Government through Technology-** Government Process Re-engineering using IT to simplify and make the government processes more efficient is critical for transformation to make the delivery of government services more effective across various government domains and therefore needs to be implemented by all Ministries/ Departments.
- **e-Kranti – Electronic Delivery of Services-** To improve the delivery of public services and simplify the process of accessing them. In this regard, several e-governance initiatives have been undertaken by various State Governments and Central Ministries to usher in an era of e-Government. e-Governance in India has steadily evolved from the computerization of Government Departments to initiatives that encapsulate the finer points of Governance, such as citizen centricity, service orientation and transparency.
- **Information for All-** This pillar aims to ensure transparency and availability of reliable data generated by the line ministries for use, reuse and redistribution for the people of India.
- **Electronics Manufacturing-** This pillar focuses on promoting electronics manufacturing in the country.
- **IT for Jobs-** This pillar focuses on providing training to the youth in the skills required for availing employment opportunities in the IT/ITES sector.
- **Early Harvest Programmes-** This pillar consists of a group of different short-term projects which have immediate effect on the Indian digital ecosystem like IT platform for mass messaging, crowd Sourcing of eGreetings, biometric attendance in the government offices, WI-FI in all universities etc.

Benefits of Digital India Mission scheme

- The Digital India Scheme made it possible to link 12000 post offices of rural areas electronically.
- This scheme increases the electronic transactions concerned with e-governance.
- In almost 1.15 Lakh Gram Panchayats, an optical fiber network of Rs 2, 74,246 Km has been connected under Bharat Net Programme.
- A Common Service Center has been operative under the National e-governance project of the Indian government that provides access to information and communication technology. Through computer and Internet access, the CSCs are creating multimedia content on various matters like e-governance, health, education, entertainment, telemedicine, and other government and private services.
- The digital village area was created with well-equipped facilities like solar lighting, LED assembly unit, sanitary napkin production unit, and Wi-Fi couple.
- Internet data is a major tool for making the delivery of services and the urban internet penetration. It has reached 64% almost.
- Presently, the number of daily active internet users has crossed 300 million from 10-15 million daily users.

Objectives of Digital India

The motto of the Digital India Mission is ‘Power to Empower’. There are three core components to the Digital India initiative. They are digital infrastructure creation, digital delivery of services, and digital literacy.

Digitalisation consists in storing data and making it easily accessible for reading, preparing actions, or making analyses. The objective behind a digitalisation plan is therefore **to make data more structured, more organised, and easily explosive**. The major objectives of this initiative are listed below:

1. To provide high-speed internet in all gram panchayats.
2. To provide easy access to Common Service Centre (CSC) in all the locality.

3. Digital India is an initiative that combines a large number of ideas and thoughts into a single, comprehensive vision so that each of them is seen as part of a larger goal.

4. The Digital India Programme also focuses on restructuring many existing schemes that can be implemented in a synchronized manner.

The Digital India Mission is a project that aims to connect the country's rural areas to high internet networks. One of the nine foundations of digital India is the Public Internet Access Program. India is one of the top two countries globally regarding digital adoption, and its digital economy is expected to surpass \$1 trillion by 2022.

The following are some of the benefits of Digital India:

- Electronic transactions associated with e-governance are on the rise.
- Under the Bharat Net programme, a 2, 74,246-kilometer optical fibre network has interconnected over 1.15 lakh Gram Panchayats.
- Under the Indian government's National e-Governance Project, a Common Service Centre (CSC) is established to give access to information plus communication technology (ICT). The CSCs deliver multimedia content relating to e-governance, education, healthcare, telemedicine, recreation, other states, and private services via computer and Internet access.
- The creation of digital communities with very healthy amenities including solar lighting, LED assembly, sanitary pads production, and Wi-Fi croupal.

Digital India Initiatives

Here are some of the initiatives under Digital India:

- Digi Lockers – This flagship initiative intends to provide citizens with 'Digital Empowerment' by giving them access to authenticated digital records in their digital document wallet.
- E-Hospitals – An E-Hospital is a Hospital Management Information System (HMIS) that serves as a one-stop-shop for connecting patients, hospitals, and clinicians via a single digital service. The Digital India initiative has resulted in the establishment of 420 e-Hospitals as of February 2021.
- E-Path Shala (Electronic Path Shala) – e-Path Shala, a website and mobile app developed by NCERT, shows and promulgates all educational e-resources, encompassing textbooks, audio, video, periodicals, and a multitude of other print as well as non-print materials.
- BHIM – Bharat Interface for Money is an application that enables the Unified Payments Interface to make payment systems simple, accessible, and rapid (UPI)

Approach and methodology for the Digital India programme:

- Ministries, Departments, and States would wholly utilise the Government of India's Common and Support ICT Infrastructure. Deity would also develop/set standards and policy guidelines, give technical and mentoring assistance, and conduct capacity building and R&D, among other things.
- Existing and ongoing e-governance programmes will be redesigned to conform to Digital India concepts. To improve the delivery of public services to citizens, scope augmentation, process reengineering, integrated and interoperable systems, and the implementation of emerging technologies such as cloud and mobile will be conducted.
- States would have the freedom to indicate possible state-specific initiatives pertinent to their socioeconomic requirements for consideration.
- While implementing a decentralised implementation model, e-Government will be advocated through a centralised initiative to the maximum extent possible to guarantee citizen-centric service orientation, compatibility of multiple e-Government apps, and optimal utilisation of ICT infrastructure/resources.
- Successes would be discovered and proactively pushed for replication, with the necessary production and customisation.

- Wherever possible, public-private partnerships should be used to undertake e-governance projects with proper management and strategic control.
- Implementing a Unique ID would be encouraged to make identification, authentication, and benefit distribution easier.
- The National Informatics Centre (NIC) will be restructured to improve IT assistance for all government ministries at the federal and state levels.
- At least ten significant ministries will have Chief Information Officers (CIO) roles developed so that diverse e-governance projects can be conceived, developed, and executed more quickly. CIO roles will be at the Additional Secretary/Joint Secretary level, with overarching IT authority in each Ministry.

Impact of Digital India Campaign

Some of the visible impacts of Digital India campaign are:

- Since its inception in 2015, the Digital India initiative has influenced several areas:
- In rural areas, some 12000 postal service branches have been electronically linked.
- India's electronic manufacturing industry has benefited from the Make – In – India initiative.
- By 2025, the Digital India strategy might increase GDP by \$1 trillion.
- The healthcare and education sectors have also seen increase inactivity.
- The economic growth will benefit from improved web infrastructure.

Advantages of Digital India:

1. Infrastructure as a utility to each citizen:

- a. Every gram panchayat will be able to access high-speed internet
- b. Individuals would be able to participate in the digital and financial space with a mobile phone and bank account
- c. They would also have easier access to public service centres in their localities
- d. Private shared space on a public cloud
- e. Cyberspace within the country must be reliable and secure.

• 2. Governance and services on demand:

- a. Integrating departments or jurisdictions to provide a single point of contact for everyone
- b. Online and mobile access to government services
- c. Making government services digitally accessible to make doing business easier

• 3. Digital Empowerment of citizens:

- a. Universal e-literacy
- b. Global access to digital resources
- c. Digital access to all government documents
- d. Online resources available in all Indian languages
- e. Digital collaborative platforms for participatory governance

• 4. Increase in Revenue:

- a. Sales and taxes can now be monitored much more easily
- b. Customers receive a bill for every purchase
- c. Retailers cannot evade paying taxes
- d. Growth of the overall economic status of the country.

• 5. Empowerment to the people:

- a. By linking Aadhaar to bank accounts, the government can transfer subsidies directly to recipients
- b. The government provides incentives to the public without them having to wait for them

- **6. Creation of new jobs:** With the Advantages of Digital India initiative, there have been various ways to improve job opportunities in new markets and increase employment opportunities in existing markets.

India's Digital Challenges

The Indian government has launched the Digital India Mission, which aims to connect the country's rural areas to high-speed internet networks. However, apart from the multiple measures launched by Digital India, the country faces several obstacles.

- Compared to other industrialised countries, the everyday internet speed and Wi-Fi hotspots are poor.
- The majority of small and medium-sized businesses are having difficulty adapting to new modern technology.
- Entry-level Smartphone have limited internet connectivity capabilities.
- In the sphere of digital technology, qualified personnel are scarce.
- To locate approximately one million experts to check and monitor the growing threat of cybercrime.
- User education is lacking.

Challenges of Digital India scheme

- The daily basis Internet speed and Wi-Fi hotspots speed are slow as compared to the developed countries.
- The small and medium scale industries are struggling a lot in adapting new modern technology.
- Limited capability of entry-level smartphones for smooth internet access.
- Lack of skilled manpower in the field of digital technology.
- To look for about one million cybersecurity experts to check and monitor the growing menace of digital crime.

The impact of Digital India was expected to in some of the ways :

- Reduce Corruption.
- Increase the speed with which public sector services are provided to citizens of the country.
- Reduce the use of paperwork.
- Provide easy-to-manage online storage space for all documents.
- Provide simple and easy-to-use cloud storage on the internet.

For so many years, our governments have worked to develop an economy that is less reliant on paper and more reliant on the internet.

The incumbent government designated all of the government's digitization, digitalization, and other initiatives aimed at improving our economy as "Digital India."

SUGGESTIONS:

To make this programme successful, a massive awareness programme has to be conducted. There is pressing need to educate and inform the citizens, especially in rural and remote areas, about the benefits of internet services to increase the growth of internet usage.

Digital divide needs to be addressed.

Manufacturing content is not government's strength. This mission needs content and service partnerships.

with telecom companies and other firms.

Private sector should be encouraged for development of last mile infrastructure in rural and remote areas. To

encourage private sector, there must be favourable taxation policies, quicker clearance of projects.

□ The success of digital India project depends upon maximum connectivity with minimum cyber security risks.

For this we need a strong anti- cyber-crime team which maintains the database and protects it round the clock.

□ To improve skill in cyber security, we need to introduce cyber security course at graduate level and

encourage international certification bodies to introduce various skill based cyber security courses.

□ There is need for effective participation of various departments and demanding commitment and efforts.

Various policies in different areas should support this goal.

□ For successful implementation, there must be amendments in various legislations that have for long hindered the growth of Technology in India.

CONCLUSION

Digital India is ambitious programme of the government having the objective of taking nation forward digitally and economically. This initiative is a refreshing move and has reduced the working for hours of technological sector. The Government of India has a hope that Digital India Programme will lead to achievements of Growth on multiple fronts. Although, the programme is facing many problems but the persistent attention and execution will convert the vision into reality for sure. To strengthen the programme we should always be mentally prepared and ready to face the challenges in implementing the programme at the ground level.

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DIGITAL INDIA : CHALLENGES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

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SUGGESTIONS

Da reality. Few of the suggestions are:

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1. Digital divide needs to be addressed.

2. Manufacturing content is not government's strength. This mission needs content and service partnerships with telecom and other firms.



3. PPP models must be explored for sustainable development of infrastructure.
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