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## DIGITAL INDIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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**Abstract** - *“Digital India” is an initiative of the Central Government of India to transform India into a global digitized hub by improving digital connectivity and skill enhancement and various other incentives to make the country digitally empowered in the field of technology. It is the outcome of many innovations and technological advancements to bring digital revolution. The drive behind the concept is to build participative, transparent and responsive system. It is a dream project of the Indian Government to remodel India into a knowledgeable economy and digitally empowered society, to ensure that government services are made available to citizens electronically by improving online infrastructure and by increasing Internet connectivity. There are many problems in the way of its successful implementation like digital illiteracy, poor infrastructure, low internet speed, lack of coordination among various departments, issue pertaining to taxation etc. These challenges need to be addressed in order to realize the full potential of this programme. Hence, an attempt has been made in this paper to realise the global as well as domestic challenges that might hinder the successful implementation of the program and suggest some feasible remedies to deal with the same. The paper also highlights the opportunities that would pave the way for achieving the program’s aim of making India the preferred choice for digital activities by both global and domestic investors and also how far the “Digital India” model can prove to be an attraction for the investors to invest in the sectors which are yet to achieve their full potential in India.*

**KEYWORDS:** Digital India, Digital Empowerment, Job Creation, Skill Enhancement.

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### Introduction

Digital Technologies which incorporates the concept of cloud computing and mobile applications have appeared as the catalysts for express economic growth and citizen empowerment. Indian history will remember the day, 1st July 2015, forever when is a flagship programme, ‘Digital India’ was launched by the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi with an objective of connecting rural areas with high-speed internet networks and improving digital literacy. Digital India is a step by the government to inspire and fasten Indian Economy to a knowledge savvy world where all the information can be acquired with in no time. It will provide all services electronically and endorse digital literacy. The program targets to make Government services available to people digitally and have the benefit of the newest information and technological innovations. It aspires to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy through infrastructural reforms such as high-speed internet in all gram panchayats, lifelong digital identification for citizens, mobile banking for all, easy access to Common Service Centres (CSC), shareable private spaces on an easily accessible public Cloud and cyber-security. Thus, the concept intended to build a participative, transparent and responsive system where all educational institutions and government services are to provide I-ways round the clock. The program is projected at Rs 1, 13,000 crore which will prepare the country for knowledge-based transformation. Companies all over the world desire to invest in

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Digital India- the 21st century India, as a growth opportunity. Hence, an attempt has been made in this paper to understand Digital India – as a campaign where technologies and connectivity will come together to make a revolutionary amendment in all aspects of governance and improve the quality of life of citizens.

### **Objectives**

1. To analyse the concept of digital India programme.
2. To assess the significance of this programme.
3. To find out the challenges confronted in implementation of this programme.
4. To trace out practical solutions and innovative ideas to accomplish the vision of a digital India-a reality.
5. To identify how the technologies and connectivity together can make an impact on all aspects of governance and improve the quality of life of citizens.

### **Literature Survey**

According to **Laila Memdani** Indian farmers are no longer traditional and illiterate. They are capable to grab the opportunities they get and make full use of the available technology. [2]

**Rani** (2016) concluded that the digital India project provides a huge opportunity to use the latest technology to redefine India the paradigms of service industry. She also highlighted many projects which require some transformational process, reengineering, refinements to achieve the desired service level objectives. [4]

**Midha**(2016) recognized digital India as a great plan to develop India for knowledge future but he also expressed his doubt regarding implementation due to inaccessibility and inflexibility to requisite which can lead to its failure. He admitted that though digital India programme is facing number of challenges yet if properly implemented it can make the best future of every citizen.[3]

Study of **Gupta and Arora** (2015) on the impact of digital India project on India’s rural sector found that many schemes have been launched in digital India to boost agriculture sector and entrepreneurship development in rural areas. Digital India programme has also set the stage for empowerment of rural Indian women.[1]

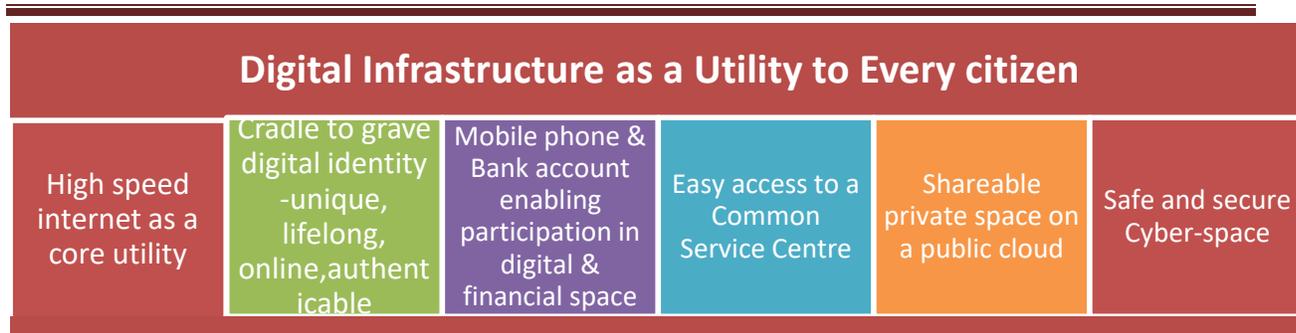
According to **Seema Dua** the mission of digital India is facing serious challenges in implementation. She believed that Digital India campaign can’t be successful until there is massive digital literacy among the citizen, development of infrastructure in rural and remote areas, improved skill in cyber security and effective participation of various departments and demanding commitment and efforts. [5]

### **Vision of Digital India**

The concept of Digital India has entered on 3 Key Areas

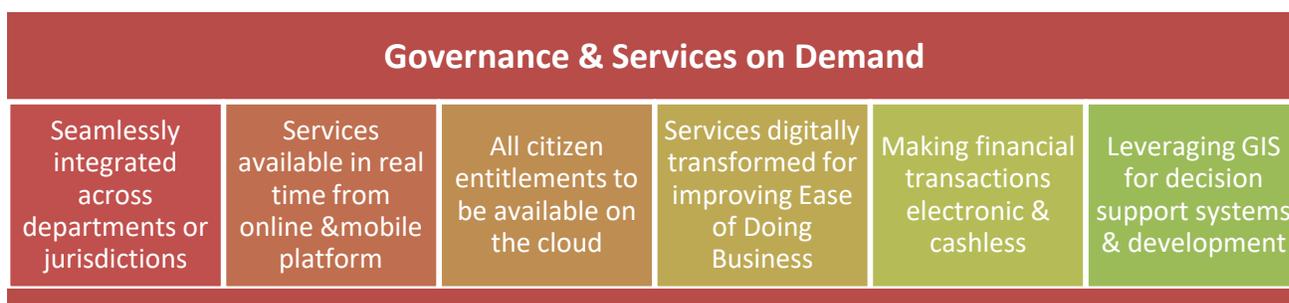
#### **1. Digital Infrastructure as a Utility to Every Citizen**

This vision leads to the fulfilment of the following needs-



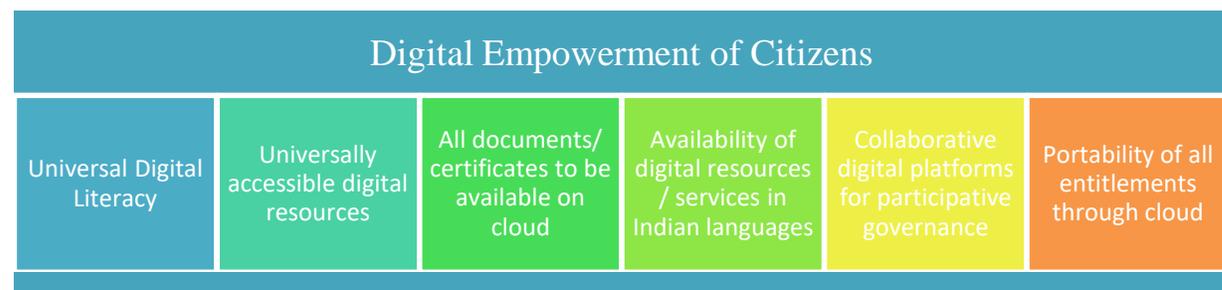
**2. Governance & Services on Demand**

This visions leads to the requirement of the following needs

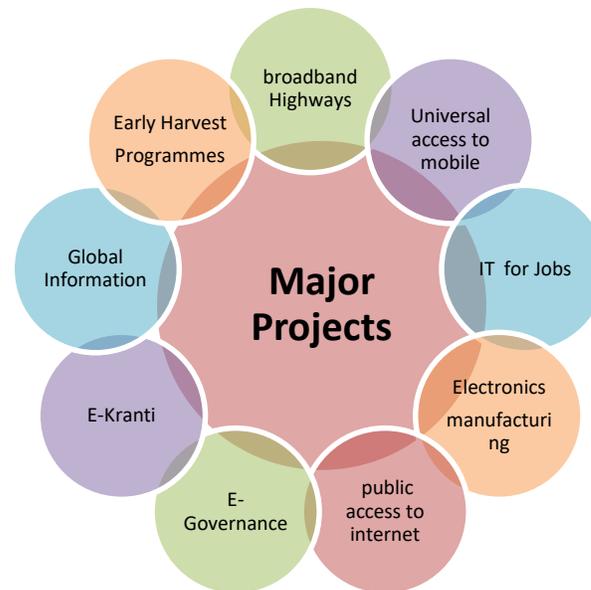


**3. Digital Empowerment of Citizens**

Fulfilment of this vision is confronted with the requirement of the following needs



Digital India comprises of various initiatives under the single programme each targeted to prepare India for becoming a knowledge economy and for bringing good governance to citizens through synchronized and co-ordinated engagement of the entire Government. Nine projects have been undertaken. These are as follows:



Government aimed to lay national optical fibre network in all 2.5 lakh gram panchayats. Broadband for the rural was to be laid by December 2016 and broadband for all urban was to update with communication infrastructure in new urban development and buildings. By March 2017, the government aimed to provide nationwide information infrastructure.

The government ensured that by 2018 all villages will be covered through mobile connectivity. The aim was to increase network penetration and cover gaps in all 44,000 villages.

Initiative was taken to train 10 million people in towns and villages for IT sector jobs within five years. It aimed to train 0.3 million agents to run viable businesses delivering IT services. Additionally, the project involved training of 0.5 million rural IT workforce in five years.

In order to achieve the target of zero imports of electronics, the government aimed to put up smart energy meters, micro ATMs, mobile, consumer and medical electronics.

The government aimed to provide internet services to 2.5 lakh villages which comprises of one in every panchayat by March 2017 and 1.5 lakh post offices in the next two years. These post offices were to become MultiService Centres for the people.

The government aimed to improve processes and delivery of services through E-Governance with UIDAI, payment gateway, EDI and mobile platforms. School certificates, voter ID cards were to be provided online.

This service aimed to deliver electronic services to people which deals with health, education, farmers, justice, security and financial inclusion.

Hosting data online and engaging social media platforms for governance was the aim of the government. A website, MyGov.in, was launched by the government for a 2-way communication between citizens and the government. People can send in their suggestions and comment on various issues raised by the government.

Government planned to set up Wi-Fi facilities in all universities across the country. Email was to make the primary mode of communication.

## **Benefits of Digital India Programme**

It is a scheme to empower people of the country. Main benefits of this programme are-

1. The digital India mission would lead to inclusive growth by enabling access to education , healthcare and government services to all the citizens of the country through common service delivery outlets.
2. Online availability of data will lead to more transparency.
3. E-Governance will help in reducing corruption.
4. Digital locker facility will help citizen to digitally store their important documents like Pan Card, passport, mark sheets etc. It will help in decreasing documentation and paper work.
5. This will lead to a cashless society.
6. The programme would generate giant demand for IT, electronics and telecommunication personnels.
7. According to World Bank report a 10% increase in mobile and broadband penetration increases per capita GDP by 0.81% and 1.31% respectively in developing countries. So, it can play a key role in GDP growth.

## **Challenges**

Almost two years are to be passed since Digital India mission is announced. A number of challenges has slowed down the pace of implementation.

1. Where there is still 25 % illiteracy the target of high level of digital illiteracy is one of the biggest challenge in the success of digital India programme. According to ASSOCHAM-Deloitte report on Digital India, November, 2016, around 950 million Indians are still not on internet. Reliance Jio has contributed a lot in his regard.
2. Creating an awareness regarding the Digital India scheme among common masses is also a great challenge.
3. It is a colossal task to have connectivity with each and every village, town and city. Connecting 250000 Gram Panchayats through National Optical Fibre is not an easy task. The biggest challenge is ensuring that each panchayat point of broad band is fixed up and functional. It is found that 67% of NOFN points are non functional even at the pilot stage.
4. India has very low internet speed. According to third quarter 2016 Akamai report on internet speed ,India is at the 105th position in the world in average internet speed and it is the lowest in entire Asia Pacific region .This lowest internet speed cannot facilitate online delivery of various services.
5. India's digital infrastructure is comprehensively inadequate to tackle growing increase in digital transactions. The biggest challenge faced by Digital India programme is slow and delayed infrastructure development.
6. The private participation in government projects in India is poor because of long and complex regulatory processes.
7. ASSOCHAM Deloitte Report pointed out that currently Over 50000 villages remain deprived of mobile connectivity because providing mobile connectivity in such locations is not commercially viable for service providers.

8. India lives in its villages. But it needs more amount of funds to meet the cost of infrastructure creation in rural areas than the urban areas. Division of fund among the rural and urban is not easy.

9. India has 1600 languages and dialects. Non availability of digital services in local Languages is a great barrier in digital literacy.

10. Fear of cybercrime and breach of privacy has been deterrent in adoption of digital technologies. Most of the technology including cyber security tools is imported. There is no sufficient skill to inspect for hidden malwares. India needs 1million trained cyber security professionals by 2025. The current estimated number is 62000.

## **Conclusion**

The goal of Digital India is far away as most of the nine pillars of digital India mission are facing serious challenges in implementation. Persistent attention must be given to each and every pillar so that this programme does not be a failure project. The following steps may be considered to fulfil the vision of Digital India

1. Digital literacy should provide knowledge to secure their online data.
2. Massive awareness is to be created particularly in rural areas.
3. Digital divide needs to be addressed.
4. This mission needs content and service partner ships with telecom companies and other firms to develop infrastructure.
5. The success of digital India project depends upon maximum connectivity with minimum cyber security risks. For this there should be a strong anti cyber crime team.
6. To improve skill in cyber security, cyber security courses should be introduced with academics.
7. There is need for effective participation of various departments and demanding commitment and efforts. Various policies in different areas should support this goal.

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