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RURAL DEVELOPMENT THROUGH DIGITAL INDIA INITIATIVE

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ABSTRACT

The Digital India agenda has created opportunities for many ministries and departments of the government to come together and develop integrated solutions. But many technology providers, and indeed even some policy planners, have begun to consider Digital India opportunity as synonymous to the development of smart cities and the "Internet of Everything". In reality, the benefits of a truly Digital India for rural areas are even more significant than the more trendy applications that urban planners can envisage. This point was brought home to some of us at NASSCOM Foundation in a conversation with secretary (panchayat) and her team in Delhi a few weeks ago. During a discussion on the National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM) and the excitement at making over two hundred million citizens and families access and disseminate information for building better livelihoods, it emerged that the vehicles that could drive the digital literacy agenda could be used to provide various other services to the rural population.

Digital Technologies which includes the concept of cloud computing and mobile applications have emerged as the catalysts for express economic growth and citizen empowerment. Companies all over the world desire to invest in Digital India- the 21st century India, as a growth opportunity. The objective of this paper is to have a vision on the Digital India campaign where technologies and connectivity will come together to make an impact on all aspects of governance and improve the quality of life of citizens.

Key words: Digital India, Digital control, E-services, Mobile Applications, Rural Upliftment.

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INTRODUCTION

Digital India is a campaign launched by the Government of India to ensure that Government services are made available to citizens electronically by improved online infrastructure and by increasing Internet connectivity or by making the country digitally empowered in the field of technology. It was launched on 2 July 2015 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The initiative includes plans to connect rural areas with high-speed internet networks. Digital India consists of three core components. They are:

1. Development of secure and stable Digital Infrastructure
2. Delivering government services digitally
3. Universal Digital Literacy

The Government's ambitious "Digital India" plan aims to digitally connect all of India's villages and gram panchayats by broadband internet, promote e-governance and transform India into a connected knowledge economy. By the year 2019, the 'Digital India' program of the Government of India (GOI), envisages that 250,000 Indian villages will enjoy broadband connectivity, and universal phone connectivity. This is a truly visionary and commendable initiative. However, to implement this vision in a country where most of the population resides in rural areas is very challenging. It can best be done by creating Digital "Town Squares" – which will be tower-based sites that enable the Smart Village and would become the focal point for the providing information, social, e-learning and e-governance services to villages. This can become the spring board for rapid economic growth in the rural areas.

Global case-studies have demonstrated how wireless broadband plays a key role in rural society, impacting GDP, productivity and employment. In a study undertaken across 26 Latin American countries between 2003 and 2009, it was observed that a 10 per cent increase in broadband penetration resulted in an average increase of 3.19 per cent in per capita GDP. In Africa, 90% of the total broadband penetration is mobile-based. E-commerce, e-health/education and e-governance are already the key applications. For example, M-Pesa mobile banking service in Kenya carries 20% of the country's GDP.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

There are following objectives of the study:

1. To study the vision and pillars of Digital India

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2. To study the opportunities of the programme for the people of the country.
3. To study the challenges in implementing digital India
4. To study the impact of digital India programme on the upliftment of Indian rural economy.
5. To study how Digital India programme will lead to empowerment of rural entrepreneurship in the country.
6. To study the impact of digital India programme on the empowerment of rural women.

METHODOLOGY

This study attempts to explain the impact of digitization on the development of Rural India. It is based on secondary data that is collected through different sources like newspaper, internet, government websites, journals etc.

NINE PILLARS OF DIGITAL INDIA

At the launch ceremony of Digital India Week by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, top CEOs from India and abroad committed to invest Rs 4.5 lakh crore towards this initiative. The CEOs said the investments would be utilities towards making smart phones and internet devices at an affordable price in India which would help generate jobs in India as well as reduce the cost of importing them from abroad. 9 Key points of Digital India Programme are as follow:

1. **Broadband Highways:** Web based portals and Mobile apps will be developed to access online information while on the move. High speed broadband highways will be provided through fiber optics that connects all the remote areas, government departments, universities, R&D etc.
2. **Universal Mobile Access:** With Digital India programme nation is ready to be well connected, efficient, and more productive in every aspect. Network technologies like 3G, 4G and upcoming 5G will storm the speed.
3. **Public Internet Access:** The two sub components of Public Internet Access Programme are Common Service Centres and Post Offices as multi-service centres. CSCs would be made viable and multi-functional end-points for delivery of government and business services. DeitY would be the nodal department to implement the scheme. Post Offices are proposed to be converted into multi service centres.

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4. **E-Governance:** This governance will transform every manual work into fully automation system. It will revolutionize the system in the following ways: • Online access to applications i.e. availability of all databases and information in electronic format. • Effortlessly tracking of assignments. • Interface between departments for superior production of work. • Quickly respond, analyze and resolve persistent problems and many more.
5. **E-Kranti:** This e-kranti will fully focus on digital knowledge program where education, health, farming, rights, financial and many more services will be delivered on a very high bandwidth. Physical boundaries no longer are a limitation when almost everyone and everything is a digital handshake away.
6. **Electronics Manufacturing:** This milestone will create a huge base for electronics manufacturing in india with the aid of digital technologies and skills. The empowerment of manufacturing through the Internet of Things will enable intelligent workshops that demonstrate data driven operational excellence and decentralized production control systems within and beyond the physical factory walls.
7. **IT for Jobs:** The government is preparing to provide training and teaching skills to the youth for employment opportunities in the IT sector.
8. **Early Harvest:** The govt. is planning to set up Aadhaar Allowed Fingerprint Presence Program in all central government workplaces situated at Delhi. A web based application software system will allow online documenting of attendance and its watching by the involved stakeholders.
9. **Information for All:** Websites and mobile apps will convey data and realistic participation and through social media. Everything is connected through virtual networks. Swift work flow and no delays due to wait in queues.

OPPORTUNITIES OF DIGITAL INDIA PROGRAMME

Though Digital India programme has faced many challenges in its implementation but it has some prospects which are mentioned below

1. It would bring in public accountability through mandated delivery of Government services electronically.

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2. Digital India programme will put an end to corruption system which becomes the main feature of the country.
3. Digital India programme aims to reduce paper work which will help to save trees & protect environment.
4. National scholarship portal, a project under Digital India, will put an end to scholarship process right from submission of student's application, verification, sanction and disbursal to end beneficiary for all scholarships provided by The Government of India.
5. It benefits people of India in every village in terms of knowledge improve by using internet in day to day life.
6. Each person will be having bank account.

SCOPE OF DIGITAL INDIA

The scope of overall programme is

- ✓ The digital India is a great plan to develop India for a knowledge future.
- ✓ On being transformation– to realize IT (Indian Talent) +IT (Information Technology) =IT (India Tomorrow).
- ✓ The programme pulls together many schemes like e-Health, e-Sign, e-Education etc.
- ✓ It weaves together a large number of ideas and thoughts into a single, comprehensive goal so that each of them is seen as part of a larger goal.
- ✓ Each individual element stands on its own. But is also a part of the largest picture.
- ✓ The common branding of program as Digital India highlights their transformative impact.

IMPACT OF DIGITAL INDIA BY 2019

- ➢ Broadband in 2.5 lakh villages, universal phone connectivity
- ➢ Net Zero Imports by 2020
- ➢ 400,000 Public Internet Access Points
- ➢ Wi-fi in 2.5 lakh schools, all universities; Public wi-fi hotspots for citizens
- ➢ Digital Inclusion: 1.7 Cr trained for IT, Telecom and Electronics Jobs
- ➢ Job creation: Direct 1.7 Cr. and Indirect at least 8.5 Cr.
- ➢ E-Governance & eServices: Across government
- ➢ India to be leader in IT use in services – health, education, banking
- ➢ Digitally empowered citizens – public cloud, internet access

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DIGITAL INDIA PROGRAMME AND INDIAN RURAL SECTOR

The vision of Digital India National programme is path breaking and has the potential for transformational changes and upliftment of rural sector of India. The plan to provide universal phone connectivity and access to broadband in 2.5 lakh villages by 2019 is going to give a boost to the rural market.Setting up manufacturing facility in India to produce large scale low cost devices, the proposal of shared use of mobile devices by families in rural markets, sharing of infrastructure cost by mobile service providers and government offering to subsidise the roll out cost of mobile services are examples of increasing the speed of providing such services within the reach of villages. Several apps have been launched to enable farmers get accurate and timely information related to crops, market prices and analytics to enhance productivity and profitability of farmers. The digital platform will open a new era for rural citizens through a variety of services like improved governance, land records, jobs, health, education and agriculture and digitization of personal and public records for safekeeping.

World's largest software maker Microsoft Corp has joined hands with the Indian Government for providing help in efforts to "transform" the country through technological innovations.

Intel India has also announced the launch of 'EkKadamUnnati Ki Aur', an initiative aimed at working with the government to create the blueprint for the digitization of rural India. The first such Digital India 'Unnati' Kendra has been set up at a Common Services Center (CSC) in Nadimpalle village of Mahabubnagar district of Telangana.

EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL ENTREPRENEURS UNDER 'DIGITAL INDIA'

Digital India programme has launched many schemes that focus on the empowerment of rural entrepreneurs of India. One of such schemes is enhancing Rural Entrepreneurship through Common Services Centres (CSCs).Rural entrepreneurs can get loan for setting up their CSCs under the Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency (MUDRA) Yojana. CSCs are information and communications technology enabled service delivery points at the village level for delivery of government, financial, social and private services such as applying online passports, land record, digital locker and Aadhaar cards. Those who want to start such service points but do not have funds can start their micro-ventures by taking loans under MUDRA Yojana.

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Another scheme for promoting rural entrepreneurship under Digitial India Programme is through Internet Kiosks. **Internet Kiosk** is a kiosk with one or more computers, a tablet, Internet connection, with a web cam that can be the set up in villages to be used as the hub of rural connectivity for providing education and training, information about agriculture and health care, employment news and market information. These cyber-kiosks can be run by local entrepreneurs thereby empowering the rural entrepreneurship.

DIGITAL INDIA AND EMPOWEREMENT OF RURAL INDIAN WOMEN

Empowerment of women of a nation leads to the successful growth and development of a nation. Digital India Programme has set the stage for empowering the Rural Indian Women. Following are some of the steps taken by Indian Government under Digital India programme for empowering rural women:

ArogyaSakhi helps rural women developing their own personality in order to providing health care to the rural area. It's a mobile application that helps rural women entrepreneurs deliver preventive health care at rural doorsteps. Women armed with tablets and mobile healthcare devices like glucometers, blood pressure checking machine visit homes and collect data from the village women. This data can be accessed by doctors at any location who could provide treatment to the patients remotely.

Internet Saathi aims to go deep with the internet usage among rural women in India. Ratan Tata has joined hands with Google and Intel to help women in rural India to access the internet in large number. The three-way project Internet Saathi will deploy 1000 specially designed bicycles with connected devices to give villagers an altogether new internet experience.

The Amakomaya Project (Nepal) aims at of providing Nepali rural women with lifesaving digital content in their own local language via the Internet. It serves a social cause which is to providing pregnant women during and after pregnancy advices. By this way, it helps reducing population and diseases in new born children. With the high mobile tapping, the program has expanded with a mobile platform, and it also connects rural health workers with urban based hospital doctors.

W2E2 (India) Women for Empowerment and Entrepreneurship, in short W2E2 is helping rural women with digital tools, e-learning, internet connection. Women tend to use the Internet for

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their own projects in fields like sustainable agriculture and rural health. Some are setting up their own kiosks and shops to provide online services to the local community, while others have taken up work as digital literacy trainers in their own local communities.

CONCLUSION

Digital India is a large umbrella program which will restructure and re-focus several existing schemes to bring in a transformative impact. The Digital India vision aims to transform our country into a digital economy with participation from citizens and businesses. This initiative will ensure that all government services and information are available anywhere, anytime, on any device that is easy-to-use, seamless, highly- available and secured. The Digital India program is just the beginning of a digital revolution, once implemented properly it will open various new opportunities for the citizens. It is one of the highly ambitious programs of Indian government, and is directly monitored by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India. The program is a multi-ministry program, with the involvement of central cabinet ministers, state governments etc. Various grand companies like Microsoft, Google and Fujitsu will also agreed be partner and help the success of Digital India initiative. While there are many obstacles in the path of Digital India program, one major of which is electricity. But this problem will soon be solved as there will be pressure on local leaders to get electricity in their village when Digital India program will be running in the nearby villages. Also, it will open gates for employment as Telecom Minister said while addressing students at Shri Ram College of Commerce: "IT gives employment to about 30 lakh people. Once Digital India becomes reality, we can give jobs to five crore plus people."

With the adoption of Digital India Project, India will have a powerful digital infrastructure. All educational institutions and government services will soon be able to provide digital services round the clock. More employment prospects will open for the youth that will boost the nation's economy. Tech giants from all over the world are willing to actively participate in this campaign. The outcome of Digital India is to produce Wi-Fi locations for people, creating job, universal phone connection, High speed internet , Digital Inclusion, eServices, e-Governance, Digitally motivated people, National Scholarships Portal , Digital Lockers System, e-education and e-health making India to be pioneer in IT use solution.

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