

Using Technology for Needy



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The COVID-19 pandemic has made all of us accept and adapt to technology in our day-to-day lives like never before, and the true value for going digital has become more important than ever. Technology has been evolving to make our lives more comfortable, convenient, and quick. Although while many of us enjoy the luxury of buying a new product or avail a

service which is just a click away, but on the other hand, in our country, there is a large population who do not have any access to basic necessities. During the lockdown, the hurdles that the underprivileged faced came out in the forefront. There were serious concerns on how this section of the population, who barely manage to keep their day to day expenses and have no savings, will be able to survive the lockdown. This saw a massive outpour of support both from the government & private and actions were taken to ensure that no one goes hungry. With slow economic activity and uncertainty about getting back to normal, India is now witnessing an opportunity to make our country self-reliant while rebuilding a new normal.

Whenever any crisis hits our nation, it is those living at the bottom of the pyramid who suffer the most, be it a natural calamity like floods, earthquakes, cyclones, or any other geologic disasters or a pandemic like the one we are facing currently. It causes the maximum damage to those who survive on the bare minimum and can't afford to revive their lives back to normal with utmost ease, unlike their privileged counterparts.

Technology use by countries

Different countries around the globe chose contact tracing as one the most efficient ways to stop the spread of coronavirus. Contact tracing requires a large amount of data management and accuracy. Different countries around the world used their own methodologies by using digital means to trace and isolate COVID patients.

Just like few other countries, the Indian government also rapidly worked on an application called The Arogya Setu app which helps to track the location of those affected by the virus and alerting those that may come in close contact with them. This application has been made mandatory across workplaces, airports, roadways, railways, and around several other places. The app has

been widely used throughout our country to provide real-time updates on coronavirus cases around, educating people on safety measures and provide help on how to make & use masks, etc.

National ID and pandemic

The current pandemic has also highlighted the need to have a National ID more than ever before. A centralised depository of all information about individuals could have been a potential game changer in tackling with the current Covid situation. It could have helped the government in multiple ways – firstly, swift transfer of financial benefits to individuals, if required and secondly, it would have also helped to gauge correctly the spread of the virus.

National IDs are especially helpful for the health departments. They can simply analyse the data to understand which locations have more congestion of senior citizens who are more prone to be harmed by the virus and therefore, promptly implement precautionary services. Contact tracing becomes much simpler with the availability of such kind of data. Later on when a nationwide vaccination process is underway, through a tech enabled National ID program, health officials can map the reach of the vaccinations and make them available in the most affected areas first over other regions.

On the Education front

The current scenario also clearly points out the fact that the education system in India needs an overhaul with more inclusion of online education. Again, in this regard, a centralised data system through a tech enabled National ID plays an important role. The effectiveness of the PRAGYATA guidelines, issued by the HRD Ministry recently, can be enhanced manifold if the government has readily available data on exactly how many students are availing online education in the country and how many students do not have access to online learning facilities. Resources can be provided to ensure more and more students across the country are brought under the e-learning systems. Furthermore, data can also be used for understanding unemployment status of fresh graduates.

If the current trends are any indication of the future, then one thing is for sure - technology will play a dominant role in our lives in the days to come. What we need at the moment is a rapid development of digital infrastructure which helps us in reaching out to that section of the population which is the most deprived.

Post COVID-19

The economic reliance on technology post-COVID-19 could make digital services an utmost necessity. The post-COVID-19 situation may drive more digital initiatives

like the one nation one ration and tele-medicine for the needy. Since villages are not well equipped with the infrastructure to provide these services, government needs to utilise resources at its command to make these initiatives available. New technologies like block chain and Artificial Intelligence is the need of the hour and can be used to reinvent e-Governance services. This will help in coming closer to Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of Digital India so that technology can be accessible to all.

India has tremendous potential for technological growth and now the world has started noticing it. Google, Facebook and Amazon have already shown interest in supporting the Digital India initiatives. Recently, Google announced to invest 10 billion dollars for digital India initiative. Google announced to invest one million dollars for digital education in India. According to Google data, India is expected to have 650 million internet users by the end of this year. Their objective is to improve online education and learning for students from 22,000 schools and one million teachers across the country. Digitization can equip students to be prepared for creating a better future for our country. A number of state governments in India have already started using technology to build better connectivity within the state and are using artificial intelligence in areas of education, healthcare, agriculture, and medicine. Some schools have even started facial recognition systems for monitoring attendance. Block chain technology is being used for providing a secure platform for the government to communicate with its citizens.

More and more states across India should now rise to the occasion and invest resources that bridge the gap in making basic services such as education, healthcare, ration, etc. available to all especially the ones, who are underprivileged.

In several parts of rural India, the reach of digital revolution is inadequate to provide support to young students. Similar to our cities, we should focus on making e-learning available to all which will ensure uninterrupted education. In today's age with the rapid penetration of the internet, this is not a mammoth task and can be done with some effort.

Digitization will help to transform lives among the youth of India and entrepreneurs, irrespective of their financial background. We live in a world where adversity makes us stronger and also gives us a new direction to recreate, reinvent, and create opportunities for all. The pandemic has opened up new avenues for growth and development. If efforts are made in the right direction and technological advancement reaches rural India then our country can easily bounce back towards the path of growth. The challenge on hand is that these benefits have to reach each person in our country irrespective of their income status or place of origin. Technology can no longer be a privilege of a few.

E-Governance with the help of high technology-enabled services can provide a helping hand to the ones that seek it the most.
