Indian Youth and Digitization –Recipe for Development of any Socio, Political and Economic Structure

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Abstract – With the world becoming a Global Village and Digitization playing a big role in the same, the adoption and adaption of Digital Technology has become an integral part of the recipe of success for the socio political development of any country. In India, the process of digitization started 25 years ago and the youth of India has very easily adopted and adapted the technology and this has become integral to their way of life and the way in which they interact with their family, friends, and the society at large through expressing their opinions on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other platforms and making sure that their voice is heard by not only those around them but across the globe. The past and current governments have also realized the importance of digitization and have proposed and implemented digitization in all fields as Education, Sports, Banking, and Agriculture. You name a file and it is positively impacted by digitization. There are negative impacts of the digitations and free flow of information on the World Wide Web but what is needed is a mechanism to manage the same and not ban digital flow of information which is the most important ingredient in the recipe for success for our youth in India as they prepare themselves to compete on the global platform.

Keywords- Digital Technology, Growth, E-Governance, Youth, Global Village, Employability

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INTRODUCTION

Head buried into the mobile phones or laptops is a common site everywhere today, at home, in the streets, in offices, in the metro, in the bus, and even when you see families sitting down for lunch or dinner. Technology and tech enabled apps have become an integral part of our life today with our youth being the ones who have most actively adopted and adapted to the new digital age. Digital Technology and tech enabled apps are no longer just mere tools but have actually become a way of life and impact the development and growth of not merely the youth but in fact the world and the society as a whole. With the ease of availability and low cost of tech tools as mobile phones and internet connections, digital technology is now at the fingertips of the youth not merely the affluent and in the cities but even the poor and in the rural areas. They are very quietly and speedily shaping the life and personality of our youth and their overall development. Digital Technology today has become the most important ingredient in the recipe of success and growth of any socio, political economic structure as the world today has become a Global Village and no country can afford to miss out in the race by lagging behind.

From the day we are born and our digital records are created, technology is impacting every aspect of our life. Be it at home, in the school, on the playground, in our workplace, with our friends and in our homes, the use of digital technology has come as a boon to make life easier for us, putting information at our fingertips and making the world our playfield.

Digitization and Education

The most significant impact of digital technology in the lives of the youth had been in the field of education both within and outside the schools. With the internet and private satellite channels coming to India around 25 years ago the youth of India got easy access to information on the internet and had access to satellite channels as CNN, BBC which gave them a much better, informed and analytical views of national and international affairs. Their horizon of knowledge had suddenly widened and they had access to tools which could make them capable of competing in the global playfield. 25 years ago this technology was still difficult for the common man to afford but today with the internet and satellite television being cost effective the benefits from these can be availed by people all across the country and for all strata's of youth in the country. We see so many success stories of people from rural areas making it big outside their village because they were

aware of the opportunities available to them outside the village and took advantage of the same.

In my home town in Bihar, two girls were keen to appear in banking competitions but could not afford to go and stay in the city and attend coaching classes. They would come to my parents' house where they had a laptop and took online practice sessions to prepare for the banking entrance tests and one of them succeeded in clearing the examination. She has since then become a role model for other girls in my village.

Then around 15 years ago digital technology brought about another revolution in the field of education within the four walls of the schools with Educomp launching its first smart classrooms in India. Today almost all public and several government schools have launched smart classrooms making education more interesting, interactive and relevant for the youth of today. The students of today have access to not merely what is available in the printed text books but analytical study material available on the World Wide Web which makes education more informed and makes them ready to face the global competition. The online education methods used in the smart classrooms, helps the youth improve their skills of creativity, project based learning, participative learning and collaborative working. Smart classroom learning is also helping the youth increase their employability quotient. In the future world, there will be no white collar job which will not require the youth to be tech savvy.

The launch of paid online digital education apps as Byjus , Udemy Coursera to name a few and freely available You Tube tutorials as the Khan Academy have also had a revolutionary impact in the field of education and have changed the way students learn today. These platforms help students learn without taking private tuitions and also learn at their own pace. While interacting with my students who today are working with global technology companies, I was often amazed at how they would use the internet to study and prepare for their competitive examinations as Civil services, UGC NET, Sate Pcs, SAT and GRE. While the parents fretted about their children not having enough books on their table and having their head buried in their laptops, the children were using the digital tool and information to study and do their research which widened their knowledge and made them better prepared for the future global challenges in the field of academics.

When Idea launched the advertisement of online education on phones through their tagline of "What an Idea Sir Jee" while several people mocked it and were not sure of the success of such an online education model reaching the nooks and corners of our country but today this is becoming a reality.

I was a personal witness to a very small live example of this when a friend of mine had an accident and was stuck at home with a broken ankle for six months.

During this period she had a lot of time on hand and she used this time to actually teach spoken English through the smart phone to girls studying in the nearby government schools.. The digital tool, our smart phone may be looked at a tool which is usually misused by the youth, but if used for the right purposes for which it was created, it can be the best tool for education for the youth of today bringing the world to their fingertips.

The Government today has also realized the importance of digitization in the field of education. While Smart Classrooms have come up in the private and government schools but this facility is available only to the few who are living in tier 1 and tier 2 cities. These smart classrooms are not there in the smaller cities and rural areas but technology ensures that they need not be left behind. If we want our youth to compete in the world we need to educate them. While we have the Make in India Program launched by our Prime Minister but if we do not have skilled manpower in India it would not be possible for make in India to be a success. While we have schools and colleges in even the smallest and remote villages of India but we are all aware of the lack of proper education in these institutions. But the advent of digital technology and the smart phones, Tablets, laptops, is fast changing the way we look at imparting education to our youth and making them ready for the new age jobs. The launch of the Swayam Portal (Study Web of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) by the government in July 2017 was a major step in this field. This portal is a very well researched platform, ably supported with content curated and drafted by the some of the finest minds in the field if education. The Platform provides for free tutorials in all fields of education and also provides for paid online tests for examinations and certification courses. They seek to cover school/ vocational, undergraduate, post graduate, engineering and other professional courses. One interesting feature of this portal is that it is also provides for courses in regional languages making it easy for our rural youth to learn and develop themselves.

Digitization and Sports

Not just education, the amazing impact of digital technology has touched almost every aspect of life for the youth and one of them being sports. The use of technology in sports was first visible to the common man when the television channels started digital analysis of the cricket players during a match. Technology has helped almost all cricketers and their coaches analyze their competition and learn from the world's best by studying their playing styles. Almost all of us have watched the move Chak De where the coach Kabir Khan prepares the Indian Hockey team by making them study their opponents steps and design their strategy to defeat them. Chess is another classic example where several players have used technology to study the grandmasters and improve their skills. Technology has also promoted E-Sports

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amongst the youth as the popular Call of Duty or the E-FIFA World cup!!

Digitization and Agriculture

The impact of technology can also be seen when we interact with the youth in the rural areas who are engaged in agriculture. With the internet being at their fingertip they have more information available about the kinds of crop to grow, the price that they can sell it at, the government schemes that they can take advantage of and several other online tools to help increase their produce. The farmers today have easy access to information about how to take care of their plants, new technology available for increased per acre crop production and the new types of better quality seeds available in the market. The agrarian youth today is taking advantage of the smart digital tools and technology to be more aware of the latest developments in the field of agriculture and adapt the same. The media is also full of stories of people , successful technocrats who have actually come back from their well-paid jobs in the foreign countries and later got engaged in agricultural business using digital information and the new age technology. Their contribution to the field of agriculture and encouraging small scale agrarian industry in the rural areas cannot be ignored today. All this would not have been possible if they did not have the knowledge which they have today because of the new age of digitization that we live in today and if they had not adopted the same. My experience with farmers in Bihar, who had come across a merchant looking for turmeric growers and when he realized the profit margin in growing turmeric, he has gradually moved to growing this cash-crop and has also found buyers online ,is eye opening. The youth in the rural agriculture sector is ready to experiment with the use of digital technology. Another farmer that I know of, read about mushroom farming on the internet and has started growing this cash crop and has also found buyers on the net. Even the government machinery has been helping in in selling his produce and earning a better profit.

Digitization and the voice of the youth today

The digital platform has also played a very important role in giving a voice to the youth of today. Be it through blogs, or Facebook, Twitter and several other tech enabled apps, the youth of today has used the digital platform to express their opinions and influence the society at large. They are not afraid to voice their opinions on social and political issues and their views have forced the governments to listen to them before taking action. A classic example which we all witnessed was the digital activism in the Nirbhaya case in Delhi. The youth used the digital platform to express their opinions and outrage, organize movements all of which no government could afford to ignore. Youth today is more informed and is not afraid to express their views on matters of national

and international affairs and have successfully utilized this tool to mobilize opinions and movements and be participative in governance.

Voice of youth and its impact on e- Governance initiatives

The views of the youth expressed through the digital media have also impacted the election manifesto of the political parties. In the last election BJP also realized that the youth today is more digital savvy and needs a government that has a digital approach and in its election manifesto in 2014 they proposed the guidelines for growing a Digital India. They focused in increasing broadband penetration in India especially in the rural areas, engage people participation in governance through social media, e- education and e-Banking.

With the government promoting e-governance and a Digital India we see new digital platforms coming up in the all sectors as education, agriculture, finance, governance and the youth of today has adapted to this new India with ease because of their exposure to and familiarity with the new digital age technology and apps.

Digitization and Startup initiatives by the youth

The digital technology has also been a strong contributor to the Startup Culture in India. The access to new ideas, startup success stories across the world, availability of talent on the net, the ability to work remotely, all these have helped many aspiring young Indians to start their own ventures and reach out to the world.

Digitization today has also made life easy for the common man. One can pay their bills online, submit taxes online, watch movies online and have fun online. One does not need to stand in long queues to pay their bills, or go to crowded market places to do any shopping. With ecommerce platforms coming up in India, the youth of today has taken to use this tool like a fish does to water. This has given a boost to consumerism with sellers being able to reach out to people in even the remotest parts of India through the digital platforms and the youth using them with ease. India is fast integrating itself on the global platform by becoming an active participant in the Global Village.

Pitfalls of misuse of digitization by the youth

Just as every coin has two sides, even the digital technology and digital apps have their positive and negative sides. While the advantages of use of digital technology and digital platforms are numerous and seem to present infinite positive possibilities for growth and development, one cannot deny that if not properly managed it can prove to be a bane for the youth who are the future of our country. Every day, we read cases of cybercrime as fraud, porn and such related crimes. The government has created a

machinery to deal with such crimes but lots need to be done in this area still.

Not just crime, excessive usage of the digital tools has also led to health issues as obesity, back problems and eye related problems amongst the youth of today. Sometimes, excessive viewing of inappropriate content can also lead to serious mental health issues. Excessive usage also leads to lack of social interaction of youth with the family. Few parents that I interacted with made a comment that while their children were comfortable interacting with the world on the digital platform, they found it very difficult to communicate in family or friends face to face gatherings.

CONCLUSION

Despite the pitfalls, one cannot deny that the fact that the road to development in any society is through the digital platform. We cannot stop the use of digital technology and related apps. What is important for us parents, teachers and government is to create a structure to monitor and manage the use of these by the youth so that the youth and digitization tools together shape the bright future of our country and make us a name to reckon with in the world.

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