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STRENGTHENING DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA THROUGH DIGITIZATION

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Abstract

Democracy does not only mean holding free and fair elections but it means much more than that. In a democracy, when people elect their representatives through free and fair elections, they become the ultimate source of power. This means that democracy flourishes when citizens are able to communicate with the government in both directions or have an open channel of contact for feedback on government actions. Together, this feedback and delivery system also strengthens the concept of democracy. Our democracy has been strengthened through a combination of domestic and international innovations, as well as the use of digital technologies for e-governance and broader social interactions. Both opportunities and problems for enhancing democracy are being brought about by digital technologies. In evaluating the effects of digitalization on democracy, there has been a startling and unsettling change over the last ten years from optimism to pessimism. Early in the 1990s and 1920s, a series of disparate but connected initiatives called E-governance Digital India planted the seeds for an India that would be digitally connected. These had little effect on the populace, though. India ranked 105th out of 193 countries in the world in 2022 according to the UN's E-government Development Index (EGDI). The current government is advancing the Digital India initiative, which has the potential to revolutionize the lives of people all over the nation, with an unparalleled mandate and a clear vision. Since the start of the Digital India initiative in July 2015, India has been at the forefront of digitizing public services. The government has improved ICT governance and policy making, increased internet access, and prioritized digital public service delivery to support good governance, which promotes inclusive growth and better service access for all citizens.

Key words: E-governance, Digital governance, Digital India, Democratic Institution, Smart phone, Election, E-court, Gram Panchayat, Bureaucracy, Bharat Net.

Introduction

Digitalization and the use of digital technologies present both a possible threat to democracy and an opportunity for democratic government. Institutions and citizens can become closer through digitalization, which also makes it possible for services to reach underprivileged groups. Democracy is more than just holding free and fair elections. Furthermore, local government governance is not the only aspect of it. Additionally, it can empower citizens and allow organizations to promote constructive change. When citizens are able to communicate with the government in both directions, that is, when there is always an open line of contact for feedback on government acts, democracy flourishes. Together, this feedback and delivery system strengthens the concept of democracy. Our democracy has been strengthened through a combination of domestic and international innovations, as well as the use of digital technologies for e-governance and broader social purposes. Digitalization carries the potential of exacerbating already-existing disparities, undermining social cohesiveness and democracy, and violating human rights if it is not properly managed. As a result, it is critical to guarantee that everyone gains an equal share of advantages from digital technologies.

Social distancing and other required safeguards during the Covid-19 epidemic have caused a dramatic spike in the usage of digital technologies. The world has gone online, and people have made the nearly seamless transition to digital forms of governance and work. As a result, all governments are showcasing their technological might in an attempt to save the sick populace. The mentality of the government has actually been completely revamped. In this context, the "digital transformation of India" is viewed as a great option for good government, which seeks to propel the nation to unprecedented heights of success and accomplishment. The domains of e-government and e-democracy leverage the internet's capacity to foster good governance and accountability, thereby strengthening the democratic culture.

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India now has more real-time digital transactions than the United States, China, and Europe put together. Its vast size—it recently surpassed China to become the most populated country in the world—but more importantly, its embrace of digitization is demonstrated by this. Since the start of the Digital India initiative in July 2015, India has been at the forefront of digitizing public services. The government has improved ICT governance and policy making, increased internet access, and prioritized digital public service delivery to support good governance, which promotes inclusive growth and better service access for all citizens.

With the rise of surveillance capitalism and other related developments, digitization has changed modes of production and produced new concentrations of economic power in business technology. While digitization can strengthen concentrated authoritarian control, it can also hasten the transition from more centralized hierarchical forms of power to more decentralized networked forms. New physical infrastructures, resource flows, and governance models are made possible by digitization, which also produces new architectures and virtual environments. Larger and larger portions of everyday life are increasingly controlled by computer code.

Review of Literature

The researcher read various magazines, articles and books available on the topic, some of which are summarized here. According to **Kausal Singh (**research paper "Impact of Digital Transformation on Democracy and Good Governance in India"), the Amrit Kaal Period, which marks the 75th anniversary of Indian independence, is a significant year in Indian democracy because it symbolizes the country's deep and enduring commitment to constitutional values and democracy[1]. **V. Srinivas** (IAS), in his paper "INDIA'S DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY@75" Said that the government of India implemented extensive administrative reforms in personnel administration and governance between 2014 and 2022 under the policy of "Maximum Governance Minimum Government." The government has been successful in converting technologically outdated institutions into modern digital institutions that benefit millions of Indians, and it has called for the adoption of next-generation reforms and the closing of the gap between the government and the populace[2].

Srinath Sridharan examine in his article " India's Digital Innovations & Democracy, Inclusive Transformation" that the Digital Transformation of Governance has been brought about by a number of profound and well-coordinated changes in workforce, culture, and technology that have allowed governance models to be transformed in strategic directions. An agile government has kept up with the times, innovated more quickly, satisfied the needs and expectations of its constituents, strengthened its resilience, fulfilled its mission or vision goals on schedule, dealt with legal requirements, and adjusted to changes[3].

According to **Ted Piccone** (in his article Democracy and Digital Technology), maximizing the advantages of digital technology while reducing its risks to their more open societies present special challenges for democratic administrations. Piccone emphasizes that three interconnected priorities are essential to maintaining robust democracies in a time of growing insecurity, tightening regulations, and geopolitical competition. These priorities are safeguarding free and fair elections, online fundamental rights, and multi-stakeholder approaches to internet administration[4].

Objectives:

Following are the main objectives of this paper:

1) To carry out a systematic analysis of the literature regarding digitization of democratic institutions.
2) To assess how digitization affects democratic institutions.

[1] JETIR2405B23.pdf, seen on 21/10/2024
[2] INDIA'S DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION JOURNEY @ 75, seen on 21/10/2024
[3] India's Digital Innovations & Democracy, Inclusive Transformation (" I did it") - BW BusinessWorld, seen on 14/07/2024
[4] Ted Piccone, "Democracy and Digital Technology", International Journal on Human Rights, United Nations, 2018

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3) To examine the main advantages of digitization in post-COVID-19 democratic institutions.
4) To offer insightful concepts and forward-looking tactics with real-world applications for a smooth transition to the digital era in order to improve the effectiveness and accountability of democratic institutions.

Methodology

Due to the theoretical nature of this research paper, information has been gathered from secondary sources such as reference books, online resources, magazines, news articles, and other publications have all been extensively consulted in order to develop the plan of this research paper, and the aforementioned sources have been examined using both explanatory and analytical methodologies.

Digitization of Democratic Institutions:

Democratic institutions prioritize infrastructure that supports fair and open communication as well as access to a variety of trustworthy information. Digital infrastructures—specifically, digital platforms for information and communication—are becoming more and more significant. In democratic institutions, it is crucial to communicate with and inform the general population. ICT's sources and methods are expanding significantly as a result of digitization. The main advantages of institutions going digital are as follows:

1) Using digital technology to transform the information and communication process
2) Digitization boosts public engagement with democratic institutions
3) Actions to achieve political autonomy

Digital India program

A variety of disparate but connected e-governance initiatives, including Digital India, were launched in the early 1990s and 2000s, sowing the seeds for a digitally connected India. These had little effect on the populace, though. India ranked 105th out of 193 countries in the world in 2022 according to the UN's E-government Development Index (EGDI). The current government is advancing the Digital India initiative, which has the potential to revolutionize the lives of people all over the nation, with an unparalleled mandate and a clear vision. In contrast to earlier initiatives, Digital India offers a unified vision and a thorough implementation strategy, integrating many agencies and both new and ongoing initiatives that are overseen and impacted centrally by the government.

The Government of India's flagship initiative, Digital India, aims to make India a knowledge economy and society empowered by technology. On July 1st, 2015, Honorable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi introduced the initiative. The following areas are included in the digital India vision:

1) Digital infrastructure as a fundamental service for all citizens
2) On-demand services and governance
3) Citizens' digital empowerment

Since people in India have been more or less open to these developments, digital democracy is still relatively new and growing with great fervor. Through a number of initiatives, programs, and policies, the government is steadily becoming more digital. The National E-governance Plan, which was adopted in 2006, was given a final boost by the Budget 2014 proposal for "Digital India," which aims to use IT as a growth engine for the new India and turn it into a knowledge economy and society empowered by technology.

Information and communication technology (ICT) is increasingly helping people learn about and discuss political issues, increasing the number of people and groups participating in democracy, increasing the transparency and accountability of democratic institutions and processes, and providing services to citizens in ways that are beneficial to democracy and society.

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Digitization of Election Process

New technologies have been introduced in large quantities during elections in recent years, and states have successfully tested and implemented new voting systems or ways to administer their electoral processes. Although the use of technology in elections is valued for its benefits, such as increased transparency, streamlined procedures, or facilitated public participation, it also raises issues because of the potential for disinformation due to security risks or a lack of knowledge about the technical process. As one of the core tenets of democracy, elections must continue to be safe, honest, and trustworthy. Serious disruptions with long-term repercussions could result from mistakes made in election administration, vote counting, or result announcement. As a result, although technology use is a popular trend, opinions on it are still divided.

The effective conduct of elections and the operations of the electoral administration in between election cycles can be facilitated by the deployment of technology. The term "new voting technologies" refers to the "use of information and communication technologies" for voting and counting. These technologies usually include Internet voting, ballot scanners in polling stations, and electronic voting machines. Between the 2014 and 2019 Indian general elections, there were notable shifts. Studying how digital media affects politics is even more crucial now that the digital divide in India is closing. One in three Indians has access to digital media in 2019, up from one in five in 2014. Cheap data plans and low-cost smartphones also significantly increased the quality of access[5].

Election administration technology has also evolved beyond the actual voting process. To maintain voter rolls, states have put in place statewide voter registration databases. Many jurisdictions have integrated new technology, such social media, GPS, and GIS, into their processes and procedures in an effort to run elections more cheaply and effectively. The Indian Parliament supports the Election Commission's research and development efforts to enhance the caliber, dependability, precision, affordability, accessibility, and security of voting technology, election systems, and voting equipment.

Digital transformation of Government

The use of digital technology to enhance government operations and procedures is known as "digital transformation of government." This involves using open-source software, cloud computing, AI, and machine learning to improve the usability, efficiency, and accessibility of government services. In order to use digital data and technology to develop, optimize, and change their services, governments at all levels are going through a digital transformation. With the use of contemporary instruments like communication platforms, data storage systems, cyber security protocols, etc., digital government frameworks seek to reinvent current procedures and workflows while providing services in novel ways. Governments may now provide individuals better information access and increased security when interacting with public institutions online thanks to these developments[6].

A number of variables have combined to speed the digital transformation of government organizations at all levels, including the federal, state, and local levels. These factors include the increasing demand for easy access to government services, supported by digital natives and citizens who are aware of the digital world, the widespread adoption of Internet-based services, which is supported by Internet penetration, the growing need to control the costs of direct and indirect service delivery, and the incapacity of physical delivery channels to efficiently serve stakeholders at scale.

Many positive developments for citizens are being brought about by the digital transformation of government. Governments can improve services, save money, and raise the standard of living for citizens by digitizing procedures and changing organizational structures. This involves facilitating the usage and accessibility of government services and procedures, such as enabling residents to apply for services online rather than in person or in line at a government office. Better

[5] https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/papers/the-impact-of-digital-media-on-the-2019-indian-general-election/ seen on 23/07/2023

[6] https://www.privacysense.net/the-impact-of-digital-government-transformation-on-citizens/#:~:text=The%20Benefits%20of%20Digital%20Government,improve%20citizens'%20quality%20of%20life. Seen on 23/07/2023

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communication between citizens and government representatives has also resulted from digital transformation, which helps hasten the process of resolving problems and receiving responses to inquiries.

The global epidemic has brought even more attention to how crucial digital technologies are to governments' ability to fulfill their mandates to provide vital services in times of crisis. To ensure that people can access what they need quickly and simply without any bother or confusion, governments must collaborate across agencies.

The process of using contemporary technology to enhance government performance at all levels is known as "digital transformation of government." Governments may improve data-driven decision making, increase access to services and information, and develop more secure and efficient processes by utilizing digital tools and technologies. Additionally, by putting people at the heart of workforce transformation initiatives, this change will enable governments to leverage digital technologies—more specifically, ICT—more extensively to enhance government operations. Although the digital transformation of government is still in its infancy, it has already had a significant impact on both governments and citizens. Because of this continuous digitalization process, citizens can anticipate even more effective systems in the future, along with better access to information and services and better data-driven decision making.

Digital transformation of Judiciary

The use of technology by the Indian judiciary has grown, and the legal profession as a whole has also changed. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, there had been some noteworthy advancement, including as the creation of E-courts and the digitization of court documents. To fully maximize its potential, digital technology must be discussed, especially with regard to the digitization of court records, the electronic filing of cases and their virtual hearing, and the live broadcasting of court events. The goal of digitalization is to expedite court procedures. It is believed that greater efficiency will lead to greater legal certainty. More stringent deadlines will be met, expenses will be minimized, and many complex processes may be managed using largely automated processes. As a result, it is necessary to alter centuries-old customs, which are difficult to break.

E-courts marked the beginning of the Indian judiciary's digitization process. It was unveiled as a component of the National E-Government initiative. The "National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology in the Indian Judiciary - 2005" marked the beginning of the conceptualization of e-courts. The Supreme Court of India's E-Committee created this plan. For Indian citizens, e-courts brought much-needed transparency and accessibility to the legal system[7]. It also reduced the cost of pursuing legal action. The project's objectives included computerizing court procedures and fostering connection between lower and higher courts. The Supreme Court App and the E-Court Services App were two more pre-pandemic initiatives to digitize the Indian judiciary. The application's ability to translate the Court's ruling into local languages was what made it so remarkable. Additionally, the application offers information on orders, circulars, etc[8].

The goal of the E-court services app, which was released in 2017, was to facilitate lawyers' and litigants' access to case details—both resolved and pending—in both lower and higher courts. In addition to offering a comprehensive case history in the aforementioned courts, the application enables online court fee payment. E-judiciary functions similarly to in-person courts, Online proceedings, online communications between judges, online exams and cross-examinations, and, lastly, online orders and judgments. Perhaps it is a full mile ahead of E-courts, not just a stride or two.
In a nation where there are already crores of cases pending in court, the COVID pandemic significantly widened the backlog. Under normal circumstances, e-courts were sufficient to reduce the court traffic. But what they could provide was restricted. In a sense, the pandemic drove the Indian judiciary to re-imagine how justice is delivered in the country. All courts in the nation have been instructed by the Supreme Court (SC) to employ video conferencing extensively for court hearings. The

[7] https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/technology-digital-system-speedy-justice-lawyers-court-system-law-judicial-records-cases-live-streaming-ecourts-covid-7940283/ Seen on 25/07/2023
[8] Digitalization and its impact on the Indian legal system - iPleaders, seen on 02/04-2024

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Supreme Court directed all high courts to create a technology usage mechanism during the pandemic by using its plenary authority under Article 142. The SC is conducting hearings online and is embracing technological advancements for its operations.

Digital transformation of Bureaucracy

Numerous factors make the advantages of digitization in public service delivery clear. In addition to improving citizen-centered services, digital transformation also boosts customer satisfaction and advances governance. Public service delivery has become more intelligent and efficient thanks to the use of artificial intelligence in public administration as part of digital transformation projects. It has made it possible to automate repetitive processes, analyze data to make well-informed policy decisions, and provide citizens individualized services.

For a while now, governments all around the world have made digital transformation a top priority. The goal of building a Digital India has also received a lot of attention from the Indian government. Nearly all public sector businesses have adopted best-in-class digital initiatives in recent years, demonstrating an increased commitment in this direction. This is being done for the straightforward reason of facilitating improved citizen services. The demands of technology are ever-evolving; providing citizens with unprecedented speed, ease, and personalization across all touch-points is currently at the top of the government's agenda. The transition from desk to digital is currently the largest obstacle facing Indian bureaucracy. This change encompasses more than just the move to e-office and e-governance; it also involves the bureaucratic and organizational reaction to digital environments, particularly social media.

Governance and efficient coordination are essential to meeting the demands of digital bureaucracy in a setting where authority and knowledge are dispersed. Because it is more comfortable, the study of digital bureaucracy aids in service and engagement through the Internet machine world. In an effort to streamline and increase accessibility, governments are now more dedicated than ever to digitizing public services and their administration. Overall, as a tool of open government, this digital transformation of public administration has the potential to produce effects that transcend beyond merely modernizing the state and altering conventional patterns of governance. In fact, nations can move toward a more horizontal form of governance that depends on the openness and transparency of public data and encourages cooperation with civil society in the formulation of public policy by implementing digital transformations in their administrations. The broad use of E-office during the epidemic allowed for efficient governance operations and aided in the establishment of paperless central secretariat offices. According to a statement from the Ministry of Personnel, Public issues & Pension, e-governance assisted in resolving 20 lac public issues in 2021 alone[9].

In order to improve access to essential services and increase efficiency, governments wish to implement digital technologies. Digital governance is the process of employing digital tools and technologies to manage data, offer public services, and control online activity inside a nation or organization. There are various reasons why digital governance is important. By using digital technology to automate procedures and minimize bureaucratic bottlenecks, it primarily aids in streamlining the delivery of public services. Additionally, governments that have embraced digital governance are better at managing user data and are more open in how they provide services. Better government relations with business and industry, citizen empowerment through information access, more efficient government management, less corruption in the administration, increased transparency in the administration, increased convenience for citizens and businesses, cost reductions and revenue growth, increased legitimacy of government, flattening organizational structure, reducing paperwork and red tape in the administrative process, which leads to better planning and coordination between various levels of government, improved relations between public authorities and civil society, and re-structuring of administrative processes are all examples of the digital transformation of bureaucracy.

[9] https://www.indiavsdisinformation.com/20230323/digital-governance-a-game-changer-in-india-s-drive-to-transform-people-s-life seen on 25/07/2023

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Digital transformation of Rural Institutions

Through improved service delivery, transparency, and the simplification of administrative procedures, digitalization has completely transformed local governance. Digital infrastructure, public interaction platforms, and e-governance projects enable local governments to more effectively answer community demands.

To improve the transparency, accountability, and efficiency of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), the Ministry of Panchayati Raj launched the E-panchayat Mission Mode Project (MMP) as part of the Digital India initiative. Additionally, the Department of Tele-communications is implementing the Bharat Net project in phases to connect all of the nation's Gram Panchayats (GPs) to broadband in order to realize the goal of Digital India. The BharatNet project has so far made 1,78,271 GPs in the nation service-ready. On June 30, 2021, BharatNet's reach was expanded to include all populated villages in the nation outside of GPs. The BharatNet project is expected to be completed by August 2023, by which time all Gram Panchayats and their equivalents nationwide will have broadband connectivity[10].

Panchayat is a subject of the state. As a result, states bear the primary obligation for equipping Gram Panchayats (GPs) with infrastructure. However, by offering financial support for specific infrastructure facilities for GPs, such as Gram Panchayat Bhawans, computers, and peripherals, with a special focus on North-Eastern States, the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Revamped Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA), which is being implemented from 01/04/2022 to 31/03/2026, complements the efforts of States on a limited scale.

Digital technology has always been a part of Indian urban governance. Throughout the 1990s, municipalities promoted computerization and the use of corporate software. In the early 2000s, a variety of e-governance changes were implemented. These included state and local programs like GIS (Geographic Information System) platforms for administrators and online billing and certification services for citizens, as well as centralized policies like the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) and initiatives like the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). Launched in 2015, the Smart Cities Mission (SCM) provided a significant and centralized push for digital interventions by selecting 100 cities to develop "smart solutions" for planning, urban governance, and digital infrastructures. These cities were viewed as "lighthouse" cities, with the expectation that they would produce technology-centric solutions that other cities in the mission could adopt[11].

Digital Implications and Challenges:

More quickly than any other invention in our history, digital technologies have transformed society and reached almost 50% of the population in the developing world in just 20 years. Technology may be a huge equalizer by improving access to public services, trade, financial inclusion, and connection. For example, in the medical field, cutting-edge technologies powered by artificial intelligence are extending life expectancy, diagnosing illnesses, and saving lives. Distance learning and virtual learning environments have made educational programs accessible to students who would not otherwise be able to participate. Blockchain-powered platforms are also making public services more accountable and accessible, while AI support is making them less bureaucratically onerous. Large amounts of data can also help make programs and policies more accurate and responsive[12].
Those who remain connected, however, are further left behind and denied access to the advantages of this new era. Women, the elderly, people with disabilities, members of linguistic or ethnic minorities, indigenous communities, and people living in impoverished or isolated locations make up a large portion of the population left behind. In several constituencies, the rate of connectedness is decreasing or even reversing. For instance, women are 12 percent less likely than men to use the internet worldwide. The workforce has evolved over time as a result of technological revolutions, which have rendered

[10] https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1842769#:~:text=Under%20Digital%20India%20Programme%2C%20Ministry,transparent%2C%20accountable%2C%20and%20effective. Seen on 25/07/2023
[11] Digital-Version_16-JAn-23_19.52.pdf , Seen on 02/12/2024
[12] The Impact of Digital Technologies | United Nations , Seen on 31/08/2024

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some job types obsolete and brought about broader societal changes. There will probably be significant effects from this present wave of change.

Most people agree that in order to manage these trends, we need to change the way we teach. For example, we should emphasize science, technology, engineering, and math more, teach resilience and soft skills, and make sure that people can reskill and upskill throughout their lives. Unpaid labor, such as child care and elder care in the home, will require greater support, particularly since the demands on these jobs are expected to rise due to the changing age distribution of the world's population. These days, digital tools like data pooling and artificial intelligence (AI) are used to detect and diagnose problems in the environment, health, and agriculture as well as to carry out everyday chores like paying bills or navigating traffic. Human rights can be protected and exercised through them, but they can also be violated, for instance, by tracking our whereabouts, purchases, talks, and actions. The ability to harvest and use data for financial and other objectives is becoming more and more available to businesses and governments.

Almost half of the world's population is connected through social media, which allows people to communicate with people around the world in real time and make their voices heard. However, it can also reinforce prejudices and sow discord by amplifying echo chambers or providing a platform for hate speech and misinformation.

Technology can contribute to a more equitable, peaceful, and just world. Every one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals—from eradicating extreme poverty to lowering maternal and infant mortality, encouraging sustainable farming and decent jobs, and attaining universal literacy—can be supported and accelerated by digital advancements. However, technology can also increase inequality, compromise security, and endanger privacy. They affect both human agency and human rights. Governments, corporations, and individuals always have a choice in how they employ and manage new technologies, just like in the past.

Digital transformation is a whole new, creative approach to a fundamental business function, not only the adoption of new software, technologies, and procedures that are more automated and efficient than conventional business practices and procedures. Organizations must undergo digital transformation in order to be competitive; it is no longer an option. Organizations can gain greatly from digital transformation, but there are certain drawbacks as well.

Digital transformation is difficult for several reasons, including:

1. **Resistance to Change:**
   Opposition to change is one of the biggest obstacles to a digital transition. Because they fear that their workflow may alter, managers and staff may be reluctant to adopt new tools and technology. Although resistance might impede the transformation process, change is unavoidable and uncomfortable.
2. **Reluctant to adopt new tools and processes:**
   People are hesitant to embrace new procedures and instruments. Organizations continue to employ outdated systems that are incompatible with contemporary digital solutions for a variety of reasons. People think that updating those outdated systems can be costly and time-consuming. Furthermore, a lot of businesses are more at ease with what they already have and are afraid of the unpredictability and expense of implementing a new digital solution that would take time and user training.
3. **Digital Illiteracy:**
   High level of digital illiteracy is the biggest challenge to the success of digital India programme. Low digital literacy is a key barrier to technology adaptation. Access to critical information and knowledge resources, which are necessary for education, skill development, and personal growth, is hampered in rural regions by digital illiteracy and limited ICT accessibility.
4. **Privacy and Security Concern:**
   In a democracy, people and organizations are very concerned about cyber-security and privacy. The majority of digital transformations entail transferring company data to the cloud and consolidating it into a single, easily accessible system. According to The World Economic Forum's The Global Risks Report 2022, the increasing complexity of hackers is making the cyber-security solutions that firms now have in place obsolete. Organizations with inadequate system linkages may be more readily targeted and harmed by more creative security breach techniques.

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5. **Inadequate Digital Infrastructure:**
The poor and delayed development of infrastructure is the largest obstacle facing the Digital India initiative. The digital infrastructure in India is woefully unable to manage the rapidly expanding number of digital communication and digital transactions.

Conclusion:

In the twenty-first century, digital technologies are pervasive and have a significant impact on the functions of society. Government initiatives are responding by shifting their procedures from bureaucracy-based to citizen-centered public services and concentrating on digital transformation. "A socio-economic change across individuals, organizations, ecosystems, and societies that are shaped by the adoption and utilization of digital technologies" is what is meant by the term "digital transformation." It is the result of multiple digital innovation iterations, including digitization and digitalization, which have helped to progressively change how processes and organizations operate. In the public sector, this phenomenon started with e-government and developed into a number of different paradigms, including smart, ubiquitous, digital, and mobile government. Public administrators are currently concentrating on digital transformation because of its potential to benefit the public and the economy by facilitating better access to resources and information. In order to guarantee socially inclusive societies, it also increases administrative effectiveness and transparency.

Both emerging and old democracies are facing opportunities and difficulties as a result of digital technologies. In evaluating the effects of digitalization on democracy, there has been a startling and unsettling change over the last ten years from optimism to pessimism. Ten years ago, digital technology was hailed as a liberating instrument that strengthened democratic participation and undermined authoritarian governments. Understanding how digitization affects democracy is difficult because it can significantly alter the settings, customs, institutions, and places where democracy can thrive or fail. This is in addition to the traditional aspects of democracy, like election campaigns, elected officials' conduct, and the interactions between citizens and other stakeholders and democratic governments.

However, India's democracy has been pushed more and more through the lens of its technological advancements and civilizational identity. Prime Minister Narendra Modi proudly praised the "democratic spirit and ethos" of "ancient India" in his speech at the first Summit for Democracy in 2021. He also emphasized the need to "jointly shape global norms for emerging technologies like social media and crypto currencies, so that they are used to empower democracy, not to undermine it."
The campaign of digitize democratic institutions cannot be successful on its own. To make democratic institutions truly digital, there will have to be a change in policy. Here are some recommendations provided to strengthen the democratic institutions[13]:

1) The first step to empowering citizens is digital literacy. People ought to understand how to protect their online information.
2) More safeguards against foreign influence and hacking should be put in place to ensure free and fair elections and the shaping of public opinion.
3) Democracies should utilize gadgets that are not connected to a digital network and upgrade their electoral systems to guarantee the integrity of their elections. For critical polling place technology pertaining to voter registration lists, voting, and results tabulation, cyber-security should be upgraded on a regular basis.
4) PPP approaches need to be developed for the sustainable development of digital infrastructure.
5) Last mile infrastructure development in rural and isolated locations should be promoted by the private sector. Favorable tax laws and quicker project approval are necessary to support the private sector.

[13] "Digitalization India: Challenges and Opportunities", Yamini P. Dwivedi, Ijraset Journal For Research in Applied Science and Engineering Technology, 2024

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6) Maximum connectivity with minimal cyber security concerns is essential to the Digital India project's success. In order to manage and safeguard the database around-the-clock, we require a robust cybercrime team.
7) The Government of India must encourage foreign certifying bodies to offer a variety of skill-based cyber security courses and implement a graduate-level cyber security course in order to enhance cyber security competencies.
8) Various departments must participate effectively, and rigorous dedication and work are required. Different policies in different places should assist this goal.
9) The Indian government ought to use digital initiatives to uphold and advance human rights. Human rights should be implemented by the government itself as a model.
10) Several laws that have impeded India's technological advancement for a long time need to be amended for successful implementation.
11) To develop and suggest a voluntary code of internet governance, a group of like-minded states should form a cyber security working group including representatives from the public sector, private sector, and civil society. The common ideals of advancing human rights, safeguarding citizen data, bolstering democratic governance and transparency, and supporting the multi-stakeholder model should all be reflected in this code.

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