Department of Political Science, Daulat Ram College, University of Delhi under the aegis of IQAC organised a National Conference on **'Digital India: Prospects and Challenges'** in the virtual mode on February 26, 2022. The Convenor and Co- Convenor of the Conference were Dr. Vandana Tripathi and Dr. Deepak Bhaskar respectively and IQAC observer was Prof. Sarita Nanda, Convenor, IQAC.

The aim of the National Conference was to analyse the revolutionary changes heralded by digitization in the context of socio-political realities of contemporary India.

Digital India is an ambitious programme of Government of India with a vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. Over the last six years the government has launched a series of flagship digitisation programmes to implement its vision of social and economic change. While there is visible progress, there have been notable as also perceptible challenges & drawbacks in areas of accessibility, affordability, authenticity, lack of digital infrastructure, fast changing systems and strategies, surveillance capitalism, online scams, cyber-crimes and violation of right to privacy in addition to the hefty cost of implementation. Also ascendancy of digital capital and technology has seen large scale asymmetries across the country that need to be addressed. Thus, the conference was an attempt to invite a critical dialogue on the impact of digitisation on the social, economic, cultural and political milieu of the society. In addition an expert view on challenges & road ahead.

The conference was graced by the presence of esteemed guests. The event was divided into three sessions that is Inaugural, Technical Session I and Technical Session II. The Inaugural session was graced by Guest of Honour of the Conference Dr. Vinay Thakur (Chief Operating Officer, National e-Governance Division (NeGD), Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology(MeitY) and Keynote Speaker Prof. N. K. Goyal (President, CMAI, Founder and chairman of TEMA).

The event formally started with the honouring the guests with virtual bouquet by Vice-Principal of Daulat Ram college Dr. Sarita Nanda. Dr. Nanda also spoke about the

importance of this conference citing the use of technology by the institution in the time of pandemic. Dr. Vandana Tripathi, Convener, Organising Committee of the Conference presented the thematic understanding of the Conference to the audience. She also spoke about the relevance of the Conference in the contemporary time of technological determinism. She also mentioned the importance of ethical use of technology.

The Guest of Honour and Keynote Speaker were introduced to the audience by Dr. Suranjita Ray, Teacher-in-charge of the Department of Political Science, Daulat Ram College, University of Delhi. She highlighted the importance of inviting different perspective on the subject. She observed that the technological gap is going to add to already existing problems of the country.

The Guest of Honour, Dr. Vinay Thakur started his address by a comprehensive power-point presentation. He gave detailed understanding of different government programs launched in various sectors. He mentioned that the technological interventions of the government are intended to reduce corruption and enhance efficiency. He observed that the technology should not be seen as replacement of human force; rather it should be complementary. He argued that E-governance is the new model of governance and it should be accepted and appreciated.

The Keynote Speaker Prof. N. K. Goyal took the charge of addressing the audience. He focused more on ethical part of technology. He argued that the ethics in e-governance is the new requirement and the initiative has been taken already.

The session followed by the question and answer round which received overwhelming response from the audience. The inaugural session ended with the vote of thanks.

The first Technical session started with formal presentation of virtual bouquet to the honourable speakers of the session. The honourable speakers Prof. M. P. Gupta, IIT Delhi; Prof. Charru Malhotra, IIPA, Delhi and Ms. Anita Gurumurthy, Ex. Director, IT for Change, Bengaluru were introduced to the audience by Prof. Suranjita Ray. Prof. Ray handed the session to the Chair of session Prof. Charru Malhotra.

The technical session opened with Prof. M.P. Gupta's paper presentation highlighting the significance of technology in empowering economy. He argued that the technology must not undermine the human content. He said that India needs to democratise the digitisation process. He observed that despite India being the leader of Information technology a large population is still deprived of technological access. The digital illiteracy is posing the challenge to the prospects of technology. He believed that technology has power to transform the society politically, socially, economically and culturally. He was advocating that the laws concerning this field need be strengthened so that people must be free from any apprehensions.

Prof. Charru Malhotra presented her understanding related to the prospects of technology. She argued that the technology has the capacity of integration. Due to the technological interventions, accessibility and mobility has increased. Technology is accelerating the process of empowerment of all. She said that it is helping women to access the world thereby shaping the world view sitting at home ushering a sea-change in society.

Ms. Anita Gurumurthy presented her power-point focusing on Gig labour. She highlighted the problem of Gig Labour. How technology has been misused to exploit these labours. Her argument was well received by the audience. The session was open for question and answer. The Session ended with the vote of thanks. This was followed by lunch break.

The last Technical Session started with formal presentation of virtual bouquet to the honourable speakers of the session. The speakers, Prof. Pradeep Thomas, University of Queensland, Australia; Prof. Suman Gupta, The Open University, United Kingdom and Prof. Dibyendu Maiti, Delhi School of Economics, were introduced to the audience by Dr. Moitree Bhattacharya, Department of Political Science, Daulat Ram College. Dr. Bhattacharya handed the session to the Chair of the session Prof. Suman Gupta.

The session began with the presentation from Prof. Pradeep Thomas. Prof. Thomas argued that the

digital infrastructure is immensely needed in the country. The large part of India is still deprived of internet connectivity. He observed that though digitisation is becoming basic necessity but it should always be done in congruence with the other basic need of society which is yet to be fulfilled. He argued that people in India are culturally and linguistically diverse. Hence, digitisation should always consider these diversity to be accepted easily.

Prof. Dibyendu Maiti gave a detail empirical understanding of economic part of digitisation. His data analysis reflected that the digitisation though claimed to bring prosperity to the people is actually not true. The digitisation has not benefitted as much as it was projected. He said that the studies are different and claims are different. The real challenge is to make technology beneficial for the people economically.

Prof. Suman Gupta presented his paper concerning the education sector. He argued that the digitisation of education needs to be re-thought as human civilisation may be reduced to machine. He emphasized that Education creates human values and the same can't be categorically said for technology. Prof. Gupta used two anecdotes to present his understanding which was well taken by the audience.

Thereafter the session opened for questions and answers round. It ended with the vote of thanks to the speakers.

The National conference concluded with the Vote of Thanks by Dr. Deepak K. Bhaskar, Co-Convenor, of Organising Committee, National Conference.

The Conference was attended by around 250 participants that included students and teachers belonging to different streams/colleges and few other guests from all over India. The response of participants was very encouraging. It is reflected through the feedback form and the remarks in person. They highly appreciated the Conference and found it very interesting, insightful, informative and enriching, thought provoking and useful. They also requested to organise such conference on useful/important topics more frequently. Around 95 per cent of them found the overall event and its usefulness excellent to very good and remaining found them good; 99 per cent have said their knowledge on the subject has improved; around 98 per cent participants found quality of speakers excellent to very good.

Dr. Vandana Tripathi

Convener, Conference
 & Associate Professor
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Dr. Deepak Bhaskar
Co-Convener, Conference