# Information Technology: The Digital Vaccine During the Pandemic

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While information technology may not be the solution to all the problems ailing the world today, the pandemic has proven that it sure is the adhesive that glues things from falling apart.

On World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, it won't be wrong to say that the evolving digital technologies have become digital vaccines that help us stay safe yet connected with our family, friends, colleagues, and caregivers.

The accelerated digital transformation has successfully brought out innovative and out-of-the-box solutions for many tasks that were until a while ago considered possible only through physical presence, such as going to school for education.

By mid-2020, many students had hopped on to online classes and other methods of digital learning. Education is witnessing a paradigm shift in India with the traditional classroom going online via digital platforms. Schools, teachers, and students have accepted the challenge by swiftly adapting to digital technologies, ensuring that students do not have extended breaks from education.

The online shopping space is also witnessing a sharp uptake with even the local grocery and retail stores going digital and providing free online delivery of all essential items. E-commerce companies are further expanding their footprint with many digital-shy homemakers entering the online shopping space to manage their household needs.

Digital payment applications have become the most preferred and sought-after modes of payment with even street vendors and local merchants using these applications to ensure contactless payment during the pandemic.

For decades, cynics have touted social media and digitisation as evil, corrupting the youth and destroying the very essence of humanity. But at a time when the world teeters on the brink, digital mediums have become the real saviours.

In an unprecedented display of global unity, people are raising funds for Covid relief via different social media platforms, connecting those in dire need of help with those willing to offer assistance

The central and state governments took to social media to spread awareness about the symptoms of the deadly virus — urging people to stay indoors, wear masks, and practice social distancing. When the world was drowning in the first wave of the pandemic last year, the Government of India launched the Aarogya Setu mobile application to keep the people aware of the potential risk of Covid-19 infection, helping them to take informed decisions.

The country's urban workforce also played its part by shifting from offices to working from home at a short notice, the smooth transition made possible only because of digital platforms. Physical meetings gave way to virtual ones, and tea–coffee break discussions were replaced by informal chat messages. Technology ensured that employees remain connected with each other.

Digital screens have successfully replaced paper — saving both time and flora. Email and text messages have rendered physical correspondences obsolete except in select fields.

While the health industry is going through a rough time, information technology has aided patients and doctors. Video consultations and online delivery of medicines and equipment have become the norm. The Government of India has also established the online registration process for vaccination using its digital platforms such as Co-WIN and Aarogya Setu, enabling people to check the availability of vaccination centres and book convenient slots.

Many states in India have developed online dashboards to help citizens know the real-time availability of hospital beds in different healthcare facilities, thereby helping people save time and avoid overcrowding.

The Indian judicial system also saw a tidal wave of change with modern digital technology paving the way for virtual judiciary to ensure the continued dispensation of justice.

By proving its versatility and usefulness in combating a global crisis, telecommunications and information technology have underlined their importance in our day-to-day life. By successfully adopting digital technologies, we have digitally vaccinated ourselves in our fight against the virus.

Though there is a lot to cheer about, this pandemic has also made us aware of the huge digital divide in the country. In the present scenario, where information technology is no longer a luxury but a necessity, the Government should consider facilitating 'Right To Technology' , to ensure the benefits have a wider reach, and only then can we proudly realise the dream of a truly digital India.