

A Guest Editorial

Bikhit Bharat: Bridging the Digital Divide

The term “*Bikhit Bharat*” reflects a fragmented India, where digital advancements coexist with glaring inequalities. The *digital divide* is not just about internet access but also disparities in digital literacy, affordability, and infrastructure. While urban centers thrive on high-speed connectivity, rural and underprivileged communities struggle with limited access, exacerbating gaps in education, employment, and governance. Factors contributing to this divide include:

- ❑ **Infrastructure Gaps:** Rural areas lack reliable internet access.
- ❑ **Economic Barriers:** High costs of devices and services hinder adoption.
- ❑ **Educational Disparities:** Digital literacy remains low among marginalized groups.
- ❑ **Gender Divide:** Women in rural regions have lesser access to digital tools.

The repercussions are profound: students face learning barriers, businesses lag in digital transformation, and citizens struggle with accessing e-governance services. Bridging the divide requires including *Expanding Digital Infrastructure* i.e. strengthening broadband networks in remote areas, *Affordable Access* i.e. Reinforcing initiatives like BharatNet and Digital India, *Digital Literacy Programs*, i.e. Empowering citizens with essential digital skills, *Inclusive Policies*, Ensuring equitable digital access for all, especially marginalized groups. Transforming from *Bikhit Bharat* to *Vikshit Bharat* demands a commitment to digital inclusivity. A truly Digital India can only emerge when access is universal, affordable, and inclusive, paving the way for a technologically empowered and just society.

Dr. Sudhir Kumar Jena

Guest Editor