NEED OF DIGITAL LITERACY FOR DIGITAL VILLAGE

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ABSTRACT-   *"If the village perishes India will perish too"- Mahathma Gandhi*

A Digital Village is a space where a community expresses their identity though ICT and Digital Media. This may be from an artistic, heritage, or economic perspective or a mixture of all three. This can be done through poetry, digital stories, community newspapers online, image collections (old and new), audio (Internet radio, oral history), animations, video, and text. To engage in the activities the participants need to learn new skills and so the Digital Village also becomes a learning community. At it's simplest a Digital Village is a community website. The term "village" need not apply to an actual village (although in many cases it does) but to a cluster of villages, a geographical area or a group of participants in a town. A Digital Village becomes a vehicle for participant led learning where the interests of the learning community set the agenda for what they learn. This is done using Community Media and innovative use of ICT, particularly open source software and web applications. The activity is informal and workshop based. Some technical support is required but the process becomes "flexible replication". Assistance from ICT animators is needed for these workshops but we have also observed peer learning taking place in these informal workshops. It is also possible to introduce an element of e-learning into the Digital Village concept. There is currently a great deal of interest in Virtual Learning Environments (VLE's) and e-portfolios. It is also very simple to consider the Digital Village as both VLE and e-portfolio. Whatever the participants want to learn e.g. digital images, creative writing, family or local history etc… can be supported on the Digital Village website VLE style and it is also presented on the DV website e-portfolio style. In Smart Villages access to sustainable energy services acts as a catalyst for development – enabling the provision of good education and healthcare, access to clean water, sanitation and nutrition, the growth of productive enterprises to boost incomes, and enhanced security, gender equality and democratic engagement.

Keywords: Digital Village, Digital Literacy in Villages

INTRODUCTION

Gandhian Thought "My ideal village will contain intelligent human beings. They will not live in dirt and darkness as animals. Men and women will be free and able to hold their own against anyone in the world. There will be neither plague, nor cholera, nor smallpox; no one will be idle, no one will wallow in luxury. Everyone will have to contribute his quota of manual labour.... It is possible to envisage railways, post and telegraph...and the like..."

Illiteracy holds people down in society and prevents communities from advanced thinking and technology. Everyday tasks are impossible and self-esteem reaches ultimate lows among illiterates. Literacy is the key to breaking out of poverty, putting a stop to prostitution and child labour, and reducing crime. It gives people the confidence to better their lives through education and pursue better jobs, and it gives them a voice and a place in today's society.

Adult literacy in developing countries has lower rates than in developed countries, and the effects on social status are devastating. Illiterates are stuck in a rut of poverty and are incapable of working higher paying jobs. In developing countries where literacy rates are lower, poverty comes with challenges of education. Schools are few and far between and funds to operate the schools are just as scarce. Illiterate adults, especially women, struggle to find a voice in their communities, and severe gender discrimination affects millions. Adult learners, and the need for improved adult literacy, deserve our attention and efforts because these people deserve the opportunity not just to survive, but to flourish. Their success is everyone's success. Literacy rate in rural areas was pegged at 71 per cent last year, compared to 86 per cent in urban areas, while among the age group of seven years and above, male literacy rate was found higher than the female literacy rate, according to NSSO survey released today. According to its findings, literacy rate among age group of seven years and above in the country was 75 per cent. In rural areas, it was 71 per cent compared to 86 per cent in urban areas.

Adult literacy (age 15 years and above) rate in India was around 71 per cent. For adults also, literacy rate in rural areas was lower than that in urban areas. In rural areas, adult literacy rate was 64 per cent compared to 84 per cent in urban areas.

Smart Village = Ideal Village + Digital Village

To use the E-Technologies of E-Governance, Digital Literacy is imminent. Projects like E-District should be started for the Digital Literacy campaign. To make the people Digital Literate, the citizens should make aware of the benefits of Digital Literacy and how Digital Literacy helps. They must be taught how can they contact and understand the working of Government without depending on the middlemen or agencies. The facilities like advantage of real time, online working etc. must be explained them well.

The use and implementation of Information Technology (IT) and Digital Technologies (DT) has improved people's day–to–day in all over the world. The Communication Technology also had a great influence on the socio-economic factors and geographic factors and living styles of the people across the world. India has been one of the emerging super powers in IT. The country has achieved impressive progress in the field of science and technology and proved as one of the fast developing country in the world. Various technologies have brought significant changes in the development of the Indian Society. The social life of Indians improved in all walks of life like living conditions, transportation, Science & Technology, Information & Communication Technologies, their level of education etc. The government of India has declared IT as one of the thrust areas for the country's development and has recognised it as an "essential service."

Digital Literacy plays a vital role in the mediation or bridging of common people and E-Government together. The ICT mediate as a tool to achieve better governance between these two. The technologies bridge each other and help to create a more transparent government. If required, it can be used for an opinion poll in implementing new policies, allowing voters to immediately evaluating their representation in the policy making, administerial decisions and ultimately the E-Governance. The transparency of Government will give direct involvement of the public to make decisions and hold elected officials or public servants accountable for their actions through E-Governance. The public could become a direct and prominent influence in government legislature if E-Governance is used appropriately. The people who want to gain the Digital Literacy may be a literate or illiterate person, irrespective of his age, sex or status factor. Only thing is, a literate person may learn to access the IT environment easily in comparison with an illiterate. But basically both literate and illiterate are deprived of the Digital Literacy.

To increase and make the people Digital Literate, at least the following steps are very much necessary.
- *The citizens should make aware of that why Digital Literacy is required and its benefits.*
- *They should know how they are benefited with Digital Literacy.*
- *How Digital Literacy is going to help in E-Governance.*
- *How can they contact and understand the working of Government without depending on the middlemen or agencies.*
- *They should be aware of the advantage of real time, online facilities etc.*

The Digital Literate and trained persons may be employed to convert all records of village level or panchayat level government records to digital data. Many employment projects like MPNREGA etc., will certainly be useful to the Government, as well as the general people. Thus the opportunity of employment also opened to the citizens. This will encourage the people to spread the Digital Literacy program and will motivate others to become Digital Literate. Another valuable component of computer literacy is, knowing how computers work and operate. Having basic computer skills is a significant asset in the developed countries. Personal Computers are no more a luxury item. It become common and considered as an "essential" house-hold electronic gadget for daily life. The reduction in the cost and the increase in income level have enhanced the option of purchasing of computer by all class of people. Slowly the fear and approach toward the computer is diminishing and the use of computer is increasing by all age group of people day by day. This also encourages computer literacy and Digital Literacy in common man. Since illiterate people represent a large part population, disconcerting that a high proportion of older people in India do not use the Internet and therefore lack Digital Literacy skills. It would seem that there are a number of different reasons for this: lack of motivation, not interested in learning new skills, having a fear of technology, not having access to IT, not being able to afford going online, lacking infrastructure etc.

CONCLUSION

The organisations may be involved in the implementation process, depending on local needs by these local bodies. The Digital Literate and trained persons may be employed to convert all records of village level or panchayat level government records to digital data. Main reason for failure of E-Governance is lack of education among people. A variety of reasons exist for the failure of projects include lack of Proper IT Education, e-awareness, Time Frame, Training and support after the completion of the automisation, No proper vigilance on the phase wise developments by the competent authorities. Indian Politics, lack of interest in taking training by the Government employees also a major reason for the failure of E-Governance project in India. Thus the opportunity of employment also opened to the citizens. This will encourage the people to spread the Digital Literacy program and will motivate others to become Digital Literate.

Similarly, the old and unused computers lying at various places like Government and Semi-Government organisation may be used for primary or initial education of computer with or without internet for Computer Literacy and Digital Literacy. Inspired by the principles and values of Mahatma Gandhi, the Scheme places equal stress on nurturing values of national pride, patriotism, community spirit, self-confidence and on developing infrastructure.

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