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Information literacy mission in digital environment – a prospects and plans for developing society in India

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Abstract:

The paper correlates literacy and information literacy. Searches reasons of illiteracy in India. Discusses present situation of literacy rate, educational institutions, Public Library Acts and digital divide. Gives the meaning of literacy and information literacy in Indian context. Gives role of Community and Library Information Centres. Information networks available for dissemination are presented in brief. Relation between e-governance and information literacy have been discussed. Some information literacy programs initiated are given. Suggests for an Information Literacy Plan for various community to take India to Millennium 2020. Recommends for a national apex body, development of CLIN and amendments in public library acts to meet challenges of digital information society.

1. Introduction: -

The information has existence since the existence of human being but the amount of

generation has increased and use of ICT and computers has made its delivery so easy and cheap that every one now wants to have information. The greatest challenge for society in the twenty-first century's keeping pace with the knowledge and technological expertise necessary for finding, applying and evaluating information. Given the ever-expanding sea of information at our disposal, analysis of an information need, knowledge of resource types, evaluation of access tools, and interpretation of results are critical to successful information retrieval.

Information literacy is a means to express personal ideas, develop arguments, refute the opinions of others, learn new things, or simply identify the truth or factual evidence about a topic. Information literacy encompasses skills but goes beyond location skills to concentrate on the bigger picture of information gathering. It stresses the basic concepts of how information is organized, the formats it comes in, and the structures used by different disciplines to record and transmit information. Information-literate searchers are conscious of the research process as it takes place. Information literacy encompasses computer literacy. A computer-literate person can manipulate electronic information tools to gain access to information. They are efficient but in many investigations they are not suitable or even readily available. To understand information literacy, it is necessary to understand literacy and reason of illiteracy. Formulation and implementation of Information Literacy Plan is required to meet challenges of modern world.

2. Reasons for illiteracy in India: -

Illiteracy is a curse to any nation. Most developed countries have attained goal of 95-100% literacy. But in developing countries, the goal is yet to achieve. India too is far behind to the goal. Illiteracy in India prevails due to many reasons, historical, geographical, sociological, political, economical, educational and cultural, etc.

21. Historical: -

India has a long history. The modern history starts with Sindhu valley civilization dating 2350-1750 B.C. Aryan civilization dates to 1500-1000B.C. Then up-to 6th BC it was period of urban civilization Moryas ruled in 322-184BC. The foreign aggression on India started in 326 B.C. Unaneas and Huns aggression came in 187 BC. Gajnavi attacked India 17 times between 1000-1027 AD. Mangoles and Mughals invaded India in 1221 AD and finally Mughals ruled till Britishers came to India and took over in 1757 AD. Portugese and French also ruled some parts of India. Thus history of India is full of foreign aggressions and rulers, which resulted in wars. During war and foreign rule social development was negligible, which is a great cause of illiteracy at the time of independence of India in 1947.

22. Geographical: -

Geographically India lies in the north of equator between 8°4' and 37° 6' north latitude and 68° 7' and 97°25' east longitude. Equator passes form middle of India. It is bounded on SE and NE by urban sea and on the SE by Bay of Bengal. On N, NE and NW lie the Himalayan ranges. It measures 3214 km from N to S and 2933 km from E to West with a total area of 3, 287, 763 sq kms. (App3.3m. sq. km.). It has diverse physiographic features, mountains in N & NE, desert on west and Indo gangatic plain and large Coastal area. "India occupies 24% world's land area, it occupies 16% of world's populations only next after China, 70% of people live in more than 5,50,000 villages (0.55m). Remainder 30% live in 200 cities and towns. 83% population is Hindu. There are 120m Muslim besides large number of Christian, Buddhists, Parsis, Jains and Sindhi. The density of population has increased form 77 persons 1 sq. Km (1901) to 267 (1991) to 324 in 2001. It is higher than that of any other nation of comparable size."

The climatic conditions are much varied having mainly 3 seasons rainy, winter and summer. It is mainly monsoonish. It has 112 main rivers and wide plain land. India is an agrarian society.

India is 1/3 of USA, 2/5 of Australia. India is 6th largest country in the world after Canada, Brazil, USA, Australia and China (USSR broken in many countries).

Due to vast area with geographical diversity social development has been unequal resulting illiteracy in different parts.

The population is polygenetic, comprising 6 main ethnic groups. There is language diversity. There are 18 recognized languages officially, believed to have 1652 mother tongues evolving from various language families. Hindi is spoken by 39.85%. Indian population followed by Bengali, Telugu, Marathi and Tamil population between 6.0 to 8.0%. Besides these English is spoken by large educated society as a second language and is a language used for research and official communication between inter-lingual cultures. Only 0.5% population speaks it.

“There are 20,000 castes, 15 religions, 2800 ethnic communities. 30% rural population live below poverty, 40% without roads, 25% does not have primary schools within 1 kilometer range

Female population is 48.1%. Only 933 females available for 1000 males. The reason is that every Hindu family wants to have male child. Female child mortality rate was higher for long time. The female literacy is 54.16% at present as against 75.85% male literacy rate due to negligence of female child education. Females were supposed to do household jobs and procreate.

There is great disparity in rural and urban literacy because education concentrated in urban areas and rural areas were neglected. Rural literacy is 59.4% which urban literacy is 80.03%. Rural poverty is higher than urban because development programs too concentrated in urban areas. Rural poverty is 50.2% while urban poverty is 24%. Due to lack of infrastructure, rural people depend on rains for agriculture, which is very unpredictable in this part of world. Lack of agriculture based small-scale industries further deteriorated the scene. Child labour due to poverty is very common so child illiteracy also prevails under these situations, which prevails in India for more than thousand years resulted high percentage of illiteracy. (1)

23. Sociological: -

Child marriage in many parts of India was prevalent which prevented child especially women child to educate. The caste system has been mainly responsible for wide spread illiteracy in India as education was banned for large section of the society. Gender deprivation also prevailed in Indian society. Once education was meant only for men and almost half of the population (women) was deprived with the benefits of literacy. Out of males only Brahmins were supposed to read and teach. Kshatriyas and Vaishyas were supposed to be just literate for their day-to-day work. Shudras, which constitute not less than 33-50% of total population were punished if they read. Thus caste system has been responsible for wide spread illiteracy in India. At the time of independence India had only 15% literacy rate. Thanks to the efforts made after independence, which raised literacy to 65.38%.

24. Political: -

India is largest democracy in the world and one of the strongest also though-out Global Intensity Report by Center for Public Integrity (USA) has put India in a weak category on public Integrity Index. The major bottleneck has been lack of transparency in functioning of the government, which empowered the bureaucracy in significant ways for abuse of power. The Right to Information Act, 2002 has been crushed by bureaucracy. Out of 25 countries 6 countries

ranked strong with US on top followed by Portugal, Australia, Italy, Germany and South Africa.

The wide spread red tapism is responsible for the improper implementation of government plans. Literacy Mission and Adult Education Programs have been launched but society could not exploit it fully. We believe 100% literacy could have been achieved at-least 10 years back with much less expenditure, if literacy programs were properly monitored and implemented.

25. Economical: -

At the time of independence India was a poor country. It was divided into two nations. Widespread immigrations started and communal riots emerged. Agrarian society was starving for food, shelter and potable water. Rehabilitation employment, industry, electricity were the priority sectors on which huge amount was being spent by Government of India. Food was imported on loans, which resulted accumulation of loans and payment of interest. This forced Indian government to give more priority to these areas. Hence education got secondary preference and less budget was available for this sector. This continued from first five year plan though situation gradually improved from one plan to another. Five yearly Plans have been formulated since 1951 for step-by-step development. Gross Domestic Products (GDP) was 3% in first three decades and per person income was very low. It has increased to 4.3% in 2002-03. Growth rate increased to 5% in 1980's. By the end of 5th plan (2002) it was 5.3%. In Xth plan 8% growth is the target. Only 3.9% expenditure on education is too low as compared to developed country. 35% people live below poverty line by the end of 1995, which is to be brought to 20% by the end of 2007. Per capita income is 45-460 USD, which must be brought to USD 1000 by year 2020. This economic condition given in brief is responsible for slow rate of literacy due to lack of fund for education only.

26. Educational: -

The foreign rulers did not care for education. Our social economic conditions also influenced educational system. Education was meant only for few rich, so called kings, Jamidars and loyals to the government. At the time of independence very few universities were existing. There were few Primary, Middle and High Schools and Colleges. For higher education one has to go to other towns and abroad. The resulted in education divide between rich and poor & rural urban population. Co-education institutes were not acceptable to society, which made the situation more grief.

The public library system did not prevail. Few monestires, temples and kings had private collections of manuscripts and books. Library facilities were available only for very few. There were few public libraries largely sponsored by book loving kingdoms. Imperial Library (now National Library). Book Act was also passed during British period, which could help in developing good collection in some libraries. The first Public Library Act was passed only after independence.

3. Present situation: -

India got dependence 57 years ago. During this period India has transfmred from a poor country to developing country and plan to be a developed country by 2020. In this chapter we are dealing with the present situation of India in relation to literacy, educational institutions, and Public Libraries and digital divide.

31. Literacy Rate: -

India has 28 constituent states and 7 union territories. Rajasthan is largest state followed by Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh , Uttar Pradesh . Sikkim and Goa are smallest

states of India. The population of Uttar Pradesh is highest followed (16.17%) by Maharashtra (9.42%) and Bihar (8.07%), Mizoram and Sikkim has lowest population in states.

The literacy rate is highest 90.92% in Kerala followed by Mizoram (88.49%) and Goa (82.32%) and Maharashtra (77.27%). Besides few union territories have higher literacy rates e.g. Lakshdweep (87.52%), Delhi (81.82%), Chandigarh (81.76%), Pondichary (81.49%), Daman & Diu (81.09%), Bihar is at the bottom with 47.53% literacy, well below national average to 5.38%.

32. Educational Institutions: -

“Currently India has 291 universities (including 70 deemed) and 12349 colleges. Globalization and privatization in education have resulted that many foreign institutions have started their centers in India and many private universities and colleges have emerged. There are 3 Information Technology Universities. There are large number of Primary, Middle and High schools in each state depending upon the size and population of the state and other socio-economic conditions.” (2)

To promote education, government is providing scholarships to many backward casts (scheduled cast, scheduled tribes and other backward classes). Under bridge education for children scheme, children between age group of 6-10 years are provided educational material and nutrition. Besides there are many other schemes run by various states to promote education and eradication of illiteracy. These cannot be discussed in detail here due to shortage of time. India spends 2.9% budget on education, which is well below international standards.

33. Public Libraries: -

So far 12 states out of 28 states have enacted Public Library Acts i.e. Tamil Nadu (1948), Andhra Pradesh (1960), Karnataka (1965), Maharashtra (1967), West Bengal (1979), Manipur (1988), Kerala (1989), Haryana (1989), Mizoram (1993), Goa (1993), Orissa (2001) and Gujrat (2002). Only 54.91% area of India has been covered under these Acts where 48.21% population live. Rest 16 states namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Punjab, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal covering 55.09% area and 51.81% population are still without a Public Library Act. This is desirable that these states will pass Public Library Acts so that Information Literacy Program can be implemented in these states. “(3)

In the states of India where library acts have been enacted have rural libraries to some extent besides States, Districts and City Libraries In Andhra Pradesh village 635 village libraries and 591 books deposited centers and 1540 Gram Panchayat Libraries have been established. Still thousands of villages are left. Gujarat had well organized Rural Libraries even before enactment of Library Act. Karnataka has Book Delivery Centers. Kerala has more than 1000 Panchayats Libraries. But still large number of village is left.

West Bengal passed Library Act in 1979 and amended in 1982, 1985, 1994 and 1998. At present there are 11 Government Libraries with State Central Libraries at its apex. 19 District Libraries, 2295 Sub-division / Tehsil Libraries. 2209 Rural / Primary Libraries and 2457 government sponsored libraries.

34. Digital Divide: -

Digital divide is chiefly responsible for information illiteracy in digital environment. Internet is growing faster than all the other technologies that have preceded it, e.g. Radio existed for 38 years before. 50m people were listening it.

T V took only 13 years to reaches this mark and Internet only 4 years. Internet use is increasing dramatically. By 2002 less than 5% of world population is able to access Internet.

High-income countries having 16% world population have 90% Internet host computers. By end of 2003, sum 47.5 million European families are connected to Internet. In India, despite of having second largest English speaking scientific professional in the world after US, the number of Internet hosts per 1000 is just 6.8 as compared to 179.1

The telephone connectivity in Germany, USA etc. is 90%, computer saturation is over 50% and home base Internet connectivity is 50%. In Africa, South America it is 5% and in Asia, China, Indonesia, etc. (80% of world), telephone connectivity is about 3%. "According to United Nation Human Development Report, there were only 38 telephone connections and 6 per mobile phone per thousand population by the end of 2001."(4) "In India, there are approximately 6m computers, of which 4 m are in business, schools, corporate, etc. and just 2m in house holds (2002). Out of 2 m house holds only 1m Internet connection would be considered on the high side. Out of 0.7 m villages do not have telephone connectivity inspite of high success rate of STD / PCO's . Many Indian villages have never made a call. The language barrier is too much. Officially there are 18 languages. A small portion of it can read and understand English instructions on the computers. Very few websites are in other languages especially in Indian languages. Very few business organizations corporates have their websites except few rich companies and corporates."(5)

Even today, in India, use of Internet is considered as unethical because of cultural background. It is because of might of having only un ethical material on the net. Young boys and girls are especially not allowed to work on computers for sake of moral.

4. Information + Literacy= Information Literacy in Indian Context -

"Information is a human product which can be facts, figures, diagrams, verbal or recorded, processed or unprocessed, good or bad. It is a knowledge developing resources. Information is wealth of a nation. It is more than gold resources of a nation. Any lack in information will lack with the benefits of it or will lead to duplication of work both wasting time and money. Right information is to be provided when it is need and where it is need and in the form in which it is need. It improves the capability of an individual, a business, a government and all governments together. Access to information and ideas is indispensable to the development of human potential, the advancement of civilization and continuance of self-government." (6)

The meaning of literacy differs from culture to culture and country to country. Unesco proposed its meaning for census purpose" A person is literate who can, with understanding both read and write a short simple statement on his every day life. A person is literate who, in a language that he speaks can read and understand if it had been spoken to him and can write so that it can be read as any thing he can say .Unesco in 1962 adopted definition as"A person is literate when he has acquired the essential knowledge and skills which enable him to engage in all that activities in which literary is required for effective function in his group and community. Whose attainment in reading writing and arithmetic make it possible for him to continue to use these skills towards his own and the community development." (7)

"Literacy as measured by the Govt. of India, in the ability to read 40 words per minute, write 20 words per minute and do 2 digits arithmetic."(8)

Information Literacy according to American Library Association (ALA) Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, "states that to be information literate a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information". This was further stated by the Association of College and

Research Libraries as “Information literacy is a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate and use effectively the needed information.” (9)

The Information Literacy is related to Information Technology skills. Information literate individuals necessarily develop some technology skills. Information Technology skills are interwoven with and support of Information Literacy. Information Literacy is an intellectual framework for understanding finding Information, which may be, in part by fluency with Information Technology. Gaining skills in Information Literacy multiplies the opportunities for individuals self directed learning as they become engaged in wide variety of information sources to expands their knowledge, to obtain information they seek various information retrieval system such as found in library and data bases accessible by computers form any location, etc.

In digital environment an on-line search calls for some basic ICT and Information Literacy skills without which a search may never be fruitful. This has direct implications on digital information literacy training indeed digital information literacy training is to adequate in most institutions and yet complexities of the digital information would call for regular and rigorous training.

“The terms defined here are related to Information Literacy:

1. **Information Literacy:** The ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use that information for the issue or problem at hand.
2. **Computer Literacy:** The ability to use a computer and its software to accomplish practical tasks.
3. **Technology Literacy:** The ability to use media such as the Internet to effectively access and communicate information.
4. **Media Literacy:** The ability to decode, analyze, evaluate, and produce communication in a variety of forms.
5. **Visual Literacy:** The ability, through knowledge of the basic visual elements, to understand the meaning and components of the image.
6. **Health Literacy:** The degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.
7. **Business Literacy:** The ability to use financial and business information to understand and make decisions that help an organization achieve success.”(10)

The term information literacy further be clarified as the information, which is present in book, journals, mass media, online databases, community experts, government agencies, the Internet and CD-ROMs. The excretion of these source is the main aim and objectives of Information Literacy Program. Books have been back bone of literacy program in India but invasion of TV and AV aids has changed this medium and can be very important tools for irradiation of illiteracy.

5. Community Information Services/Centre and Public Libraries :

Community Information Centre (CIC) has been defined as centres, which assist individual and groups with daily problem solving and with participation in the democratic process. The services concentrate on the needs of those who do not have ready access to other sources of assistance and on the most important problems that people have to face, problems to

do with their homes and their jobs and their right CIC may cover a very wide field of our day to day needs, e.g. information on housing, loans, rural banks, prices, agricultural inputs, local markets, panchayats, cooperatives hospitals, etc. It may include statistical data related to people, socioeconomic data, Environment, NGO's rural medicine, government officials working in the area. The information has to be obtained for govt. bodies, institution, NGO's, govt. reports, field works and residents of the village. The information available in these centres can be used by administrators, NGO, field workers and residents.

These are basically information centers established to create awareness among rural people about rural development program.

“Community Information Network (CIN) has been defined as an electronic information network linking people with information and people with people. It enables communication, education, trade and empowerment and serves the living needs of communities. CINs play significant role in promoting democratic process. CIN can provide variety of information like health information, geographical, agriculture, wealth and data warehouse of various departments. It can also provide information about voter list, locality information, health.”(11) Librarians can play vital role as CIC by building the contents .The collaboration between two can fulfill requirements.

The CIC can be taken as extension of services by libraries .CIC can fill gap between information rich and poor. Librarians have to come forward and show their importance. They have to come out of library buildings and join hands with other organizations in providing more wide information.

With the help of CIC all sorts of information may be available under one roof with the cooperation of various agencies including public libraries. Thus expenses on running parallel agencies may be minimized in used with the maximum utilization of resources

“The library in a particular locality may become a clearing house for current information on community organizations, services, etc. it should respond to the community problems. It may provide specialized services both inside and outside the library building, such as job information for a community with high un-employments. The library may create local directories, maintain files of service agencies and local organization helps individuals to become self-sufficient. Users will have a none stop center to get information about local issues, organizations and services and keep abreast of local issues.” (12)

Community Information Systems (CIS) are emerging as a facet of public library system. The term CIS represents to describe services, which assist individuals and groups with daily problem solving.

Govt. of India appointed a committee to prepare draft of National Policy on Library and Information System NAPLIS (1986). An Empowered Committee (1986) was established which reported in 1988 and recommended that main thrust should go to rural public library and be developed as Community Library and Information Centres.It also recommends sponsor of these center by various department. Rural Libraries can be transformed to CIC.

6. Information Networks: -

In India there are many networks. NIC is an important one for community data. INFLIBNET is useful for academic purposes. These have been discussed in brief.

“National Information Centre (NIC) was setup in 1975 at Delhi and with regional centers at Pune, Bhubaneswar and Hyderabad. National Informatics Centre, earlier with Planning Commission, shifted to Ministry of IT which has developed

extensive data base up-to all districts level. The center has good way of collecting information through its various sources from villages to district headquarters. The state-wise coverage of different section is a unique contribution of NIC. The various portals dedicated to states and various districts headquarters providing the information, about crops, population, health, and so on, under the particulars state sites like <http://www.mp.nic.in>. However, the communication is so far an only from villages to the headquarters but two ways communication from headquarters to villages yet to commence.

To support information support to district level, NIC in 1987 launched a program to develop statistical information system and data basis at district level called DISNIC. It's objection include to promote geographical Information System and facilitate information culture at the district level through appropriate training program. With the help of DISNIC all kinds of information all district, block, panchayat and village may be available. All 450 districts of India has a NIC Centre.

Besides the NICNET has entered into a MOU with the National Library of Medicine USA and provides services in MEDLARS . The center subscribes to a large number of databases on CD-ROM. It collaborates closely with NISSAT. The NIC also developed a computerized on-line patent information system based on bibliographic data available from the International Patent Deocumentation Centre (INPADOC). ”(13)

“The mammoth and prestigious project for library networking among academic and research libraries was launched by the UGC in 1988. Known as INFLIBNET. It is a multiple function /service network with emphasis on resource sharing and cooperation using computer-communication links. It has given big boost for modernization of library services.”(14)

INFLIBNET has started bridging the divide by providing assistance to universities and college libraries for infrastructure and consortia based knowledge subscription The INFLIBNET is designed to be a computer-communication network for linking libraries and information centers in universities and other institution of higher learning including colleges, UGC Information Centres, and Research and Development institution in the country. UGC Info-net program is a nation wide network of the Indian academic universities to facilitate inter university communication and organizing training programs.

Besides there are various National networks e.g. INDONET, RABMN, INET, ERNET, BTNET, VIDYNET, SIRNET, CALIBNET, DELNET, SAILNET, OILCOMNET, SBINET, RAILNET, INDIAN AIRLINES NETWORKS, etc.

7. e-governance and Information Literacy: -

e-governance in India has come as a result of dot.com boom. It is basically reaching government to the citizen and vice versa on-line. It is latest application of IT. e-governance is application of IT in government action and procedures through which citizen use the same in their interaction with the government. e-governance model has been started in many countries like UK, USA, Australia, Chile, Singapore, etc. for various purposes. In India though this model has not started from centre to states, but the state governments at their own efforts have adopted e-governance model in their own way

Information Kerala Mission has started to cover all 990 Village Committee (Panchayats) of the state. A computer is located in the local library and jointly managed by Panchayats and Dept. of IT of Kerala. It provides Internet facilities too.

In Andra Pradesh all district headquarters have video-link facilities. Land records have been computerized .The scheme is extended to 1125 Mandals (Village clusters). In Hyderabad

district 16 Mandal Offices have been provided two computers and a printer. Data on 30 different services and utilities are provided through their one stop shop portal. National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad established public libraries in 2 districts of Andhra Pradesh as CIC's. Karnataka, the heaven of IT in India has included Village local self-government (Panchayat) Information System (GPIS) and opening of Gram Panchayat (Village government) Information (GPI) Kiosks. Municipal Industrial Trust (Karnataka) established 30 Village Information Centres (VIC). In Kerala, villages will be linked to district headquarters for transparency and accountability governance. In Orissa steps are being taken to connect state headquarter with all districts and blocks headquarters. Himachal Pradesh plan to install computer and Internet access in every school, polytechnic, college, universities and public hospitals. Maharashtra has also adopted e-governance. Land records are available to farmers of 70 villages in Kolhapur and Sangli district. "Wired Village Warana is implemented at woman Cooperative complex at Kolhapur (Maharashtra). In Orissa is linking district and block headquarter with state headquarter with the help of GRAMSAT. In Tamil Nadu State government, Reliance and Sam World Tel Limited paid 3000 Km. Optical fiber lines and created Tamil Network to facilitate on line transaction in many citizen services to its citizens. Swaminathan Foundation, Chennai developed concept of Information villages in 4 areas of Tamilnadu

Besides a few other important projects are: TARA Haat.com, Development Alternative (U.P. and Punjab), Lokmitra Project (H.P.), Keltorn Information. Kiosk (Kerala). (15)

Recently on 21st Jan. 2004 Central government has started Call Centre. It has a free telephone call number 1551. 8 Centres have been opened at Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad in south India, Kolkata in eastern India, Mumbai in Western and Kanpur, Delhi and Chandigarh in North India. It has 12 subcentres. The call center works from 6.00 –7.00 AM and 8.00 PM in the evening. It solves problems of farmers on-line. The experts advice may be taken if required from various government owned institutes.

In Madhya Pradesh Information Messenger (Gyandoot) achieved international recognition by winning Stock Holms Challenge Award. Madhya Pradesh is leading state in India to implement e-governance in district of Dhar. Information Messenger (Gyandoot) was first implemented on first day of new millennium 1st Jan 2000 in Dhar district of M.P. The project has won international "Stockholms Challenge Award, 2000" in Public Service & Democracy category and also C S I -TCS National I T award for Best IT usage instituted by the Computer Society of India for the year 2000.

Information Messenger (Gyandoot) is an information highway in the villages. Each village under the project in Dhar district has a computer centre. Any body can get information about agriculture, forests, crops, fields, and water resources of villages/towns/tehsils etc. and get answer of any complaint or request within a prescribed period. Applications can also be sent on these computers to different government departments of the district on line through this network.

The server / hub is a Remote Access Server (RAS) housed in the computers room in District Panchayat. The Information Messenger (Gyandoot) centres called Information Kiosk (soochanalayas) have been established at very popular or common places in the buildings of village (gram) panchayats. Each 38 Information Kiosk (soochanalayas) have been equipped with pentium computer with multimedia colour monitor along with a dot-matrix printer. An UPS is available at each center to serve during electricity cut in rural areas

The Information Messenger (Gyandoot) Committee (Samiti) offers the software, named

as 'Gyandoot Software' Information Kiosks have dial up connectivity through local exchanges on Fiber optics \ UHF links. So for 28 Information Kiosk (soochanalayas) have optical fiber connectivity. WiLL (Wireless in Local Loop) technology from IIT Chennai is also being implemented for improving bandwidth & connectivity problems in remote areas where telephone wires or OFC are not available.

The village committee and the local community selects Information Manager or Assistant (soochaka) at initially started 21 centres. A panel of three candidates were selected for each centre by them who received training at the District Council, Dhar One best trainee was selected as " Information Manager or Assistant (Soochak) " out of the panel of these three. They run the " Information Kiosk (Soochanalay) "on commercial lines.

It provides Registration of applications, Public Grievance redressal, Government programs, Applications and formats for local administration, Transparency in Government working, Expert advise and Agriculture produce marketing services through this intranet project. Besides it also provides rural e-mail, e-market, e-auction, e-marriage, e-news facilities to the community with the help of internet. (16)

Here we would like to mention that e-governance projects help in information literacy to a great extent. The services of e-governance projects reach common citizen both at urban level and rural level. The services provided by Public Information Kiosks make people aware of the ICT uses.

The project has proved to be very helpful in spreading Information awareness in rural areas.

8. Information Literacy in India: -

The seeds of information Literacy lies in literacy. The seeds of Information Literacy are germinating of its own spontaneously. The need of information has been realized for national development but clients are not trained as matter of serious efforts. They are learning here and there by trial and error methods. Libraries have been providing "User Education" to the readers since long. Reference service, personal assistance, information desks are personal services provided by the libraries to their readers. Though at higher education level, INFLIBNET has taken initiative. University Grants Commission and Indian Council of Agriculture Research jointly providing training to the agricultural librarians for information search in digital environment. Still Information literacy is in primitive stage as a whole. Computer courses have been introduced in many courses in Middle school level courses. Computer Science has been introduced as optional paper at Secondary school level and in some courses at college level.

"On World Literacy Day December 2nd, National Institute of Information Technology (NIIT) with its 3800 Education Centres in India has launched computer literacy program.

National Institute of Information Technology (NIIT) has 3,800 education centers in India and many other countries. NIIT took initiative to launch World Literacy Day (WLD) since 2001 on December 2 every year to reduce digital divide. The NIIT has trained 35 m individuals in the basics pf computers. NIIT has developed easy to comprehend computer literacy program. Swift Jyoti and is probably swiftest means of creating computer awareness and a low cost training program. The program covers mostly under preivilaged school children. It is given a **slogan** "Each one –reach one". The aim of the program is to strengthen young minds with the light of

computer knowledge and help them integrate into tomorrow's IT savvy India.” (17)

“Akshaya in Kerala aims 100% literacy. It has been launched on 5th May, 2004 in a district in Kerala. 600 Akshaya training centers will train people of the districts with an aim to 100% literacy in the state. It is the largest rural wireless network, help, in bringing e-govt. to individual households of Kerala. It has entered in final round Stockholm Challenge Award. Japan is likely to aid Akshaya, Malaysia has also taken interest. Simputer may be used. It 100% e-literate district in beginning of 2004 Chmravttom village of Tripangode Panchayat of Malappuram district has distinction of being 1st e-literate village in Kerala (and in India as well). One person each household gained skills to use computers and send email. The project was inaugurated by Honorable President Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam. It aims to establish 9000 CIC across the state as a part of campaigning to bridge digital divide. First 100 % literacy was achieved at Kozhipe on 18 April 1991.

People Learning Centers (target 1 Lakh 0.1m) under National Literacy Mission (NLM) (1988) Jana Shikshan Kendras have been established all over the country in rural areas with objectives to disseminate information on development program and organize library and reading room in the evening. These are run by persons called Motivators with an honorarium of only Rs. 200 p m (USD 4 p m)”. (18).

9. Information Literacy Mission: -

“Honorable President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam’s vision “ Indian Millennium 2020 “ can transform India as a developed country by the year 2020. So the year 2020 is the year of target to achieve Information Literacy. By this time 90% literacy rate can be aspected. If we make a target of one person each household as information literate, a household made of 5 persons, one out of every five persons should be information literate by the year 2020. It means 20% population will be covered under this program and can be treated as target achieved.” (19) So for no serious efforts have been made for information literacy program at community level. Akshaya can be treated as a milestone in the area of Information literacy.

An Information Literacy Mission should be launched by Union Government (Like Literacy Mission) and should be implemented in each 450 districts of India by establishing District Library and Information Literacy Centres. This responsibility may be entrusted to District Library in collaboration with District National Informatics Centre (DISNIC). The centers will be coordinating agencies with e-governance projects of the district and other agencies working in the area of collection and dissemination of information at local level.

These can be housed in a building with a District Librarian or Director of Library and Information Literacy Mission as head. An Information Literacy Plan has to be developed very carefully in prevalent sociological, economical and educational conditions at the headquarters of Information Literacy Mission. The Indian society is clearly divided into Urban and Rural, Literate and Illiterate and Rich and Poor. The plan has to take care of all irrespective of sex, age, cast, religion and occupation. It has to reach to last person in the society poor rural illiterate in due course of time. Digital divide do exist in the society. On one hand we have to educate those who have technology but are unaware of the importance of information and its exploitation. On the other hand we have to take technology to the deprived people and make them information literate.

An Information Literacy Program should be implemented in various phases at different level. Free distinct groups shall be made namely students in educational institutions, urban

community and rural community for implementation of Information Literacy Program.

A. STUDENTS: -

Information Literacy Program for the students of various levels requires careful planning in different types of institutions.

The universities and colleges are mainly in urban areas. Higher Secondary (Junior Colleges), High Schools, Middle schools and Primary schools are in both urban and rural areas. The students at all level should be covered under Information Literacy Program.

1. Higher Education: -

Information literacy shall be made compulsory under teacher training programs. Curriculum at various levels should provide courses in information literacy. A credit should be compulsory at Ph.D. level by 2005, at Post Graduate level by 2010 and at graduate level by 2015 in all courses.

* To develop skills among professionals Information Literacy shall be made compulsory as part of curriculum in professional education at all level.

* State Departments of Education and Universities shall be responsible to ensure Information Literacy curriculum in their syllabus so as to move from book and lecture style learning to resource based learning.

* In service training to teachers in Information Literacy shall be given during refresher courses, orientation courses and other such courses.

* University and College Libraries can initiate in ILP to the students of campus.

2. School Education: -

* At school level, a course of different standards shall be developed and made compulsory in all courses. A time frame can be setup to introduce such courses 2005 in all 10+2 and high School courses, 2015 in all Middle school courses and 2020 in all Primary school courses in cities, towns and tehsils headquarter. Rural area schools may be covered by Community Information Centres during the same period in phased manner.

* Formulation of courses shall be entrusted to National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) at national level. State governments departments of education shall implement the courses with modifications as and when required.

* Private schools taking advantage of available resources shall take lead well ahead the schedule.

* There shall be a computer lab in every school with computers at the ratio of 1:50 students.

B. URBAN COMMUNITY: -

* District / City / Town / Tehsil Library and Community Information Centres shall be developed in collaboration with state governments, collectorates, local self- governments and District / City Public Libraries.

* An awareness program shall be initiated from time to time.

* Local newspapers, cable network T V and Radio shall be used to make community aware of information literacy.

* One person each household shall be covered under Information Literacy Program in first phase.

* Help from local computer training institutes and cyber cafes shall be taken for implementing Information Literacy Program.

* Different modules for community shall be developed with the help of local committee constituted for the purpose e.g. household information module for housewives, jobs and small industries information module for young business information module business class. It will develop interest in Information Literacy Program.

C. RURAL COMMUNITY: -

- * One member each family shall be target group.
- * In villages Community Library and Information Centers shall be developed in collaboration with rural public libraries, e-governance kiosks, schools and local self-government offices. Block level Community Library and Information Centers shall be established by the state government and local self-government. An amount cess collected under Public Libraries Act and contributions from states and district budget, public donations shall be contributed to the fund.
- * People's participation shall be ensured at each level.
- * Information required shall include area profile, local history, loans, record, various application forms, land records and market rates of various agricultural produces in the area in near by markets, etc. The centre will also include information to students of primary and middle schools in the village.
- * Information Literacy Classes shall be arranged at suitable times in the morning and evening and during off seasons.
- * Leaflets shall be distributed and other media shall be used for propaganda of Information Literacy Program.
- * Coordination with various offices working in rural areas shall be made.
- * NGO's will be encouraged for implementation of wide spread Information Literacy Program in rural areas.

D. STAFFING: -

- * People participation shall be ensured in each village.
- * The villages shall be categorized in various categories based on certain standards developed for the purpose. The residents shall contribute a percentage of expenditure to establish community information centers. The target shall be achieved in phased manner so as to meet it by 2020.
- * At district level District Libraries a NIC Officer and e-governance officer shall share the work. To coordinate the activities a District Director Information Literacy Program shall be appointed.
- * At tehsil level, the Tehsil Librarian / Intermediate Higher Secondary School teacher shall be entrusted with the responsibility.
- * At block level block librarian / a high school teacher shall be appointed as Block knowledge server. He/her shall be trained at district for 30 days.
- * At village level, a middle / high school passed local resident of village shall be appointed as "Knowledge server". A training for 15 days at district center shall be organized.
- * At each level training in Information Literacy shall be provided as a short-term course under each category. Fees will be charged for the course but it shall be free for certain category of users. Only those who are interested in promoting.

E. TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT: -

- * The library acts shall be passed in all other states and be suitably amendment in

the states where Public Library Acts have been passed to bring Information Literacy Program within their sphere of activities and also to procure digitized material in the libraries under Press and Registration Act and Delivery of Book Acts (20)

- * Indigenous software shall be developed in important languages to meet local needs. These shall be made available free.

- * Formation of Data Banks shall be initiated at local and regional level.

- * The information shall be made available on CD's.

- * Audio Video CD's shall be prepared for day-to-day local requirements.

10. Recommendations: -

Following recommendation are made for the implementation of Information Literacy Program. -

- * The definition of information literacy in Indian contexts should be formulated to set target to be achieved at different levels

- * Research studies into demographics, cultural background, economical condition and information need should be undertaken to evaluate various Indian population and culture against defined levels of information literacy.

- * Union Government should take initiative to set a national apex body such as Indian Information Literacy Forum or Autonomous Indian Information Literacy Council under the Ministry of Information Technology and in collaboration with Ministry of Human Resource Development and Ministry of Telecommunication.

- * All state governments should take initiative to set up State Forum / Council to mobilize Information Literacy Program in their states

- * Information Literacy should be explicitly part of Indian Government innovation strategy India Millennium 2020.

- * Information Literacy Policy initiative must be taken in the context of education policy formulation particular to India.

- * Educators must especially identify information Literacy as an objective in the curriculum, at various levels, develop programs to meet those objectives and secure funding for these programs.

- * Educators must raise the awareness of government and education administrators regarding the Information Literacy requirements of to-days work place and what can be done within the education system to address those needs.

- * Community Library and Information Network should be established by opening a Community Library & Information Centres e-governance kiosks should be well within the ambit of CLIC. These shall be amalgamated in one unit. Rural Public Libraries should be converted in such a center.

- * ICT should be made cheaper.

- * Alternative power sources should be exploited to meet power requirements in rural areas.

- * Training of information managers should be started as short term certificate courses by various library schools. Rural educated youths should be trained in these centers at minimum fees.

11. Conclusion; -

In the last we must remember one thing, the success of information Literacy Program

cannot be achieved without the well-developed library system, especially Public Library System and converting them into Knowledge Resource Centres or Community Library & Information Centres. Librarians are the best information managers and service providers.

India is making great strides in the information age by building and strengthening telecommunication infrastructure and planning for knowledge-based economy. As a nation, we have to go miles ahead to become a truly information literate society. We face number of challenges but we have determination to face every challenge. There are opportunities in India for securing greater support of information literacy. Support form various implementing agencies such as union and state governments, local self governments, educational administrators, business houses, industries and NGO's shall ensure significant progress and that every Indian is a beneficiary of the Information Literacy Program.

India desires to attain status of developed country by the year 2020. The same has been incorporated in Tenth Plan (Five yearly development Plans of India). In the 21st century we are into the knowledge society where knowledge is primary resource instead of capital and labour. Efficient utilization of knowledge through Information Literacy can create a comprehensive wealth for the nation and improve existing quality of Life.

India employed 74% of people in agriculture, which has been reduced to 62% in 1992 and is aspected to be further reduced by 2010. The service with knowledge industry component form 15% has increased to 27% and is aspected to increase 50% by 2010. Knowledge in the field of IT has opened up the opportunities for many services. In India Information and communication technology contribute just of 2% of GDP at present, which is to be brought to 8% at par with developed countries. It should be raised to at-least 15%by the year 2020. In order to realize developed India by the year 2020, five key areas have been identified. These are Agriculture and food processing, Electric power and infrastructure, Education of health, Information & Communication Technology and Critical technologies(space and defence). It is a welcome move that ICT is one among five priorities.

The goal can be achieved by Providing Urban Amenities in Rural Areas (Called PURA). The upliftment of villages within next 17 years is necessary. Villages have to be provide physical connectivity, electronic, economic and knowledge connectivity for the purpose to full the gap between rural and urban areas.

When the nation is a developmental mode, the most important need of the country is an integrated development and ICT.

“Honorable President of India Dr. Kalam suggested to students participation during holidays to remove illiteracy to certain number of people in their area. The farming community may increase the productively with the use of new scientific methods. The information knowledge workers have to get a tredemendous responsibility to contribute in the areas of e-governance in rural areas, telemedicine and e-literacy, etc (21) Information Literacy is the only answer.

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