"Developing India with Communication Technology"

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It is only the communication capability of man that has provided him with an edge over other species on this earth and he succeeded in evolving various complex forms of communication for expansion of his resources as well as for having better control of his environments. Media of communication, thus, acted as a mirror of society. But at the same time, it has also been employed by man as an instrument of social and technological change. However, there is a need to properly harness the medium of communication through mediamen and media organisations suitable to people's need and aspirations so that communication gets democratized for development purpose.

In contemporary societies people communicate in many ways. And, the present century has been a century of media revolution. The two revolutionary media – radio and T.V. - emerged in this century and have established themselves revolutionizing the media scene. Now telematic media has emerged to give a new dimension, utilizing the technologies of television, cable satellites and computers.

Our modern civilization is now on the track of transformation. Transformation is about turning aspirations into reality, converting set backs into opportunities. It is about courage of conviction. It is about what Charles Handy calls "the creation of new alchemists from ordinary people". Transformation to me is the end result of a highly energized process that combines human ingenuity with its indomitable spirit to make new things happen and create value. This is what we as a media professionals are trying to bring forth. We have to cope up with the changing lifestyle, and with the needs and desires of modern civilization which is totally or we could say trying to depend upon technology to get and do things fast, accurate and in a systematic and scientific way.

The vision of transformation to a 'developed' India can only be realized if we launch a mega mission for empowering rural people because the majority of our billion population live in the rural parts of India. This should include four components, physical connectivity by providing roads in rural areas, electronic connectivity by providing reliable communication network and knowledge connectivity by establishing more professional instructions and vocational training centres. Instead of village population coming to urban areas, the reverse phenomenon will take place.

Being in the field of media all we can do is to adopt and practice these technological changes so that most of the population can be well affected. Today it is paradoxical to say that Communication Technology is only associated with the markets and capital intensive methods of production of developed countries and it has any relevance for a country that still lacks basic necessities of life. That is why a number of efforts are underway in India and other developing countries to provide the concrete benefits of Communication Technology for rural population. Development through Comm unication Technology includes improvements in the capabilities of the population such as education, health and nutrition, family welfare etc. Communication Technology services are also educating and mobilizing the rural populus to actively participate in the democratic decision making process.

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Communication Technology is making successful attempts to solve the problems of Digital – Divide by bridging the gap between the have and have nots. The application of Comm Technology based services in most of the rural areas has been devised with the following aims and objective:

1. To provide better health care facilities and more information about the treatment of deadly diseases.
2. To provide transparency to the rural masses in the case of public administration and Panchayati Raj Systems i.e. to provide information regarding taxes, saving schemes, rural development programs, policies, planning etc.
3. To provide current market rates and information to the agricultural practitioners and thus helping them in direct dealing world wide web.
4. To provide the rural people information about new methods of cultivation and also providing them the knowledge about various development taking place in the fields like horticulture, pissiculture, sericulture and animal husbandry.
5. To improve the literacy rate particularly of rural women that can have a lasting impact on rural poverty by making them self-sufficient.

BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY APPLICAION

1. Lack of local information: The most far reaching barriers of practicing communication Technology based services is the lack of local information that the user wants most, i.e. the local information about their communities.
2. On-line illiteracy: Nearly 45% Indians are affected by literacy barriers. The content that is available on the internet for masses are mostly in elite languages, the highest of which belongs to English.
3. There is no tool or interface that has been developed to provide the have-nots of developing countries to publish and create content in their local language.
4. There has been no basic standard for developing or enabling Comm Technology services at community level. There has been no effort to educate and train the have-nots for using new communication advances.

Despite these barriers our people have started seeing the benefits of Communication Technologies. Reaching the target of nearly 10 billion dollars in exporting software development has increased the opportunities. India has also responded well to the wireless revolution and today we see the cell-phone penetration on a steady increase – a sign of good economic growth. The convergence of ICTO, nano -technology and biological sciences is in the horizon. India is even better placed to exploit this revolution than any other nation. India will soon be using space technologies and applications to develop its one billion population. The space summit held as part of the 90th Indian Science Congress in Bangalore, has sent out a strong signal that India's space capabilities will play a dominant role in making India a developed nation. India will be extensively using its array of satellites and remote sensing systems for transforming the quality of Indian life.

Every country is unique and distinct in its own way, and so is India. Permit me to recount some of the attributes that stand India out. These are, her ancient civilization, deep and resilient cultural roots, her incomparable and multifarious diversity and the potpourri of her languages and dialects, cuisines, customs and traditions. Combine them with our traditional deep roots, belief in piece and non-violence, secularism and democracy, the saga of our independence struggle, Indian contribution of non-alignment to the world, the role in forefront in the fight against colonialism, racism, apartheid and currently against terrorism, and also our unshakable commitment to a nuclear – weapons

free world. Add to these our achievements of the 50 old years, an uninterrupted civilization, democratic and secular polity, the accelerated pace of economic development since the 1990's and the technological advances in the cutting – edge areas such as nuclear, space, IT, communication and biotechnology.

When all this is veined in the context of India's bewildering diversity, sheer size in terms of the population as well as the problems faced like poverty, illiteracy and certain traditional evils, the heritage of several other persistent and unavoidable obstacle, and last but not the least, cross border terrorism – even insurgency – instigated, encouraged and abetted by a not so friendly neighbour, one might get a more vivid perspective of what India is, what she stands for, what her achievements are and what shapes the orientation of her policies and priorities. People of our country have shown to the world that democratic traditions are deep rooted in our civilization and that is our strength.

In fact all of us on this day should pledge themselves to build upon this unique heritage.

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