Internet Saathi: A Step towards Promoting Rural Indian Women

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Abstract—

Internet is the network of networks. This is the most wonderful gift of electronics and communication science during the last century. Internet actually a global system and interconnected computers and that are from wide sectors including the private, public settings and also educational, research—and so on. Internet is useful to get and provide information services to the connected devices with proper communication, format etc. India is one of the important country in the world in internet uses. Millions of people are using the internet services but it is a fact that many are still not using the services due to economical and social barrier. The 'have' and 'have not'—these perspectives are also there in internet world. Thus this resulted in the digital divide. The Internet Saathi is a scheme to remove digital divide by transforming internet and web applications.

Keywords—

Internet Saathi, India, Internet, Digital Divide, Information Divide, Information Literacy, Computer Literacy, Network Literacy, Development, Information Sciences, Social Information Systems

Introduction—

The Internet is providing several information and information resources which include the hypertext documents, utilization of www, email, FTP, peer-to-peer and also sharing of the file. Today Internet telephony and internet television have become important and most valuable and emerging services. The whole internet system is managed by the ICANN (i.e. Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, Internet Engineering Task Force (IETE). During the last few decades, many divisions have emerged and new contributions have been added and as a result internet users increased rapid manner [2], [3], [4]. India started its internet journey long back but the rapid growth added during the last of 1990's. As on 2014, 40% of the total population in the world are using the internet. In India, Several Government institutes, telecommunication policies help in the user base rise. *'Internet Saathi'* is a social computing and informatics implementation initiatives by the private player to improve internet base among the women in rural India only.

Aim of the Study—

The main aim and objective of this study include but not limited to as follows—

- To learn basic about the internet and its initial stage and period.
- To find out the *'Internet Saathi'* initiative and also its offer in different context.

- To learn about the principle benefit of the project and services.
- To know about the tremendous changes in *'Internet Saathi'*.
- To know about the similar Social Computing and Social Informatics initiatives in India.
- To learn about the *'Internet Saathi'* in the context of removing Digital Divide and similar concept.

What is *'Internet Saathi'*—

'Internet Saathi' is a rural women empowerment initiative started jointly by the Google India, Intel, Tata Trust. The initiative had started in mid of 2015 with five states and in 2016 during June, July another four states have added in this Social Computing and Informatics initiative. It is normally provided by the women to womens. At first the 'Google-Intel-Tata Trust' normally train the selected women and ladies and later on they have to join in the initiative [7], [8], [22]. The bicycle is the main pillar of this project as the women trainer need to reach the remote villages to train the selected women.

Fig: 1-The launching of Internet Saathi program in West Bengal [20]

Creating awareness about the internet, computers and their benefits are also most important and valuable aim of this project. Local NGO's and community group have also potential sources of training in this project.

Apart from the cycle, the project is also started by the Van and with the support of motorbike in some cases. In this project a minimum of two days a week the training normally offered and it will run up to four to six months [11],[12], [22]. Normally the bike will also work in a cluster of three villages at a time. As a whole, the plan is estimated to offer the services to around 5, 000, 0000 women [9], [10], [23]. It is a fact that the Internet users are visiting rapidly and the male user base reach 57% while females have sharing of only 27%. Today internet is popular in several languages and users are also attracting and interacted for such kind of services. Some of the speech and comment of the planner and organizer in this regard will be helpful and these are reported in the news papers and showcase videos [13],[16], [23].

- **Ranjan Anandan** *"explains that only 12% of rural internet users are women. While new male internet users grow at a pace of 57%, females lag behind at 27%. The most interesting thing about these growth rates, he explains, is that the next 100 million Internet users will not be fluent in English. According to Anandan, the fastest growing websites on the internet today are in local languages"* [21]
- ***Sapna Chadha*** *"it was found that in rural India, only one in every 10 women knew how*

to use the Internet. "The major reasons are cultural barriers, lack of awareness and lack of perceived value," she said on Wednesday here. Accordingly the project of identification of villages, choosing girls and then training them as Saathis began."[20]. She also mentioned that **Chadha** said *"their search engine was equipped with voice search, which would prevent literacy from becoming an impediment. This is the first such initiative by Google worldwide, and India was selected owing to its huge population base"* [20]. In the context of its launching in West Bengal in June, 2016 she has mentioned that *"In the next few months, we will see the project roll out across 400 villages and reach one lakh women in Purulia,"* [24].

- Ganesh Neelam said "*This has a ripple effect among the community and is a sustained, long-term effort through which these women get comfortable in using a smartphone. They use it to access services such as healthcare, agriculture and educational resources etc."* [24], he further informed, *"the challenges include cutting across the language and cultural barriers and mobile connectivity in remote villages"* [24].
- Sandeep Menon, Country Marketing Manager, Google India said *"Lots of Women are using Internet for the first time and learn several things with their as usual like"*[26].

In an another talk, a trainee explains that in the villages the girls normally offered the studies up to Class VIII and Bhilwada Dairy in Rajasthan trained few of these students towards internet and their positive and possible uses [23], [26]. Moreover many have used the internet benefit for their own small business. The rural Indian women have also used internet services to learn about the strategies and running their business well [17], [18]. In another testimonial, another women said that her business and restricted on designing of textile material and she learn a lot from the internet regarding manufacturing st...
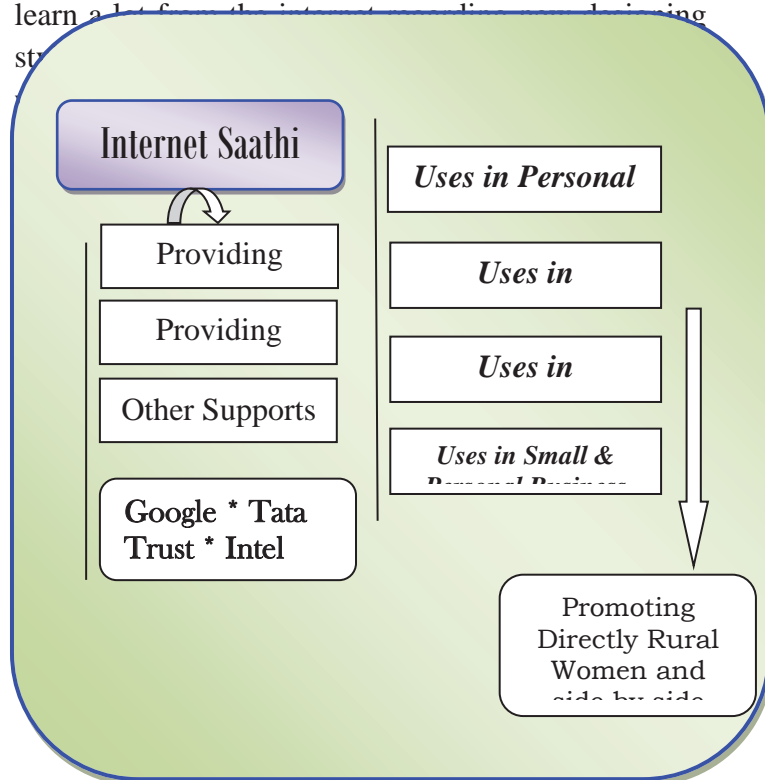

Fig: 2- The Internet Saathi Project and uses

Initially the program of *'Internet Saathi'* backed by the Google initiative "Helping Women get Online in the Year 2013" and in that program the initial awareness on computer has been provided to the women and thereafter in 2014 and 2015 (casually and completely) the Rural Women internet awareness program has revised among the most important services of *'Internet Saathi'*, few important are include—

Basic internet services which include the information gathering on a wide range of subjects and areas like education, Government, Business, Politics, Trade and Commerce, Health, Agriculture, Weather and so on [7], [19]. Thus rural Indian women are not at all aware about the information benefits. Many rural Indian are doing very small business and family based business and thus they can get the information and market price, raw materials, retail marketing place, customer base, supply chain, marketing strategies by email, website creation and so on [1], [5], [22].

Similarly, those who are not in business and in education and can get lots of information and resources from the web [15], [27]. The books, free encyclopedias, free article, free diagram based information helps a lot to the students who are reading in higher secondary level or who are studying graduation and post graduation in the rural colleges and nearly suburban colleges. The internet practice is also increasing the higher education related internet among the rural women. More importantly, those who are not in formal education, they can get the information from the web and it will be a great alternative for many women in the villages for the empowerment.

The other stakeholders of *'Internet Saathi'* may also be benefited by getting information and knowledge of several kinds such as depending upon need one can get the health related information like availability of data and specialization in a hospital, related to blood bank, best hospitals etc. in a particular area, distance, way to register and so on. This way depending upon need and internet one can get knowledge about the Government and politics, agriculture, weather etc. Thus ultimately this would help in better information

literacy among the rural Indian women and it will also be helpful for the next generation and others who are not aware about the internet and more clear information. The rising information literacy will help in removing digital divide as well [14], [28]. Thus the *'Internet Saathi'* program will help in many other activities and several other services like—

- Exchange and delivery of electronic mail to any Internet user in any location and anytime with just few setup and device.
- Participate and collaboration in off-line discussions with the help of the e-mail with peoples by the features such as 'mailing lists' and 'News Groups'.
- Real time participation in a conversation with another person by the 'Internet based video phone' or the 'audio-video conferencing' in the multiple location with people using appropriate applications for the computer programs and equipment.
- Participate in real time written discussion among the group of peoples by the use of 'Internet Relay Chat' (IRC) service - chat rooms.
- Use of the 'Telnet' services for any kind of data collection and information gathering and so on or some per function quite the same.
- Uploading as well as downloading the Files and documents and other features with the applications of FTP and allied service.
- Use of 'hypertext' for Reading complex documents, here it is just need to Clicking on a keywords or image on the screen. Then the users will automatically goes to other facilities within the same/ other domains, based on applications.

Fig: 3: Depicted How Internet Saathi is helping Digital Divide and Information Divide
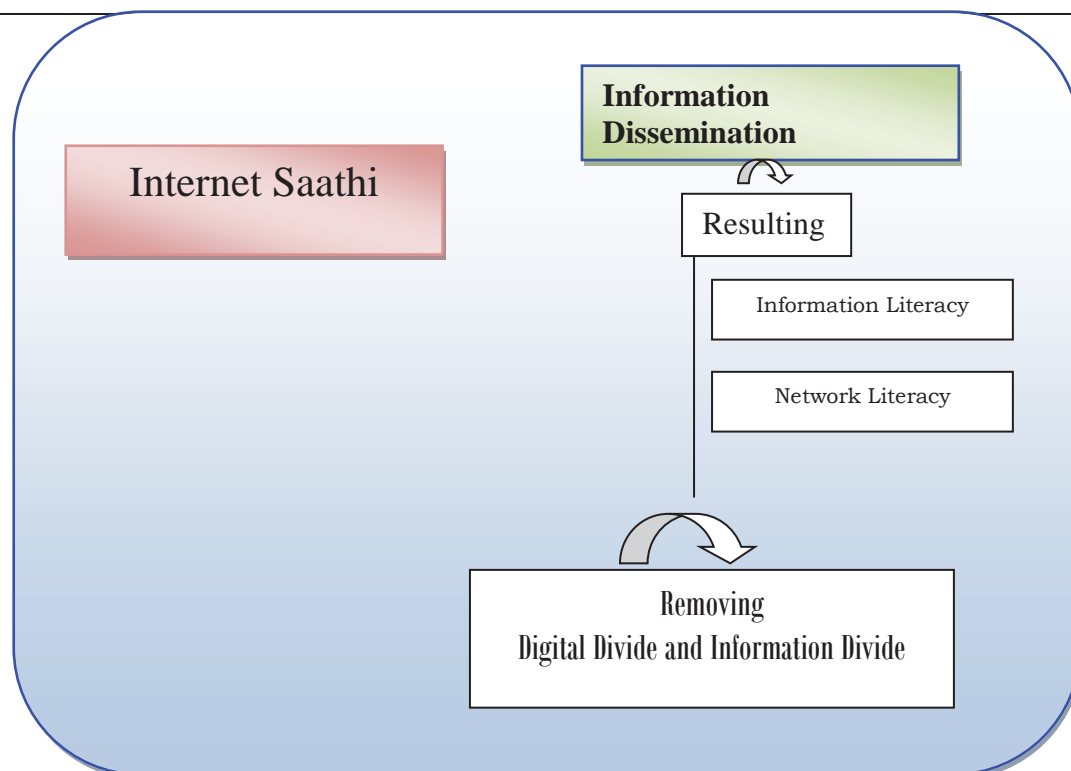
- Read multimedia documents from the internet that contain several type of matters such as text, graphics, sound, and video with the help of smart and intelligent browser web presentation such as the 'Google Chrome', 'Firefox' or 'Internet etc.
- Learning and practicing for the exam and achieve appropriate certification.
- Search the information and content from the Web, documents, various other sites such as 'Bing' 'Google' and 'Yahoo!', oversubscribed keywords to find the desired documents.
- Publicly disclose of the images and also pictures of families as well as who wants to can publish a picture of mother in law.
- Marketing and business uses in a variety of ways, from setting up video clips to the creation of their own website.
- Paying bills through the 'Internet Banking' and 'Mobile Banking' etc.

- Read web editions of newspapers and other knowledge dealing materials.

Suggestion—

This way apart from getting the basic information and internet services one can go for other high-end and latest services which include instant messaging, internet forums, social networking, online shopping, use of internet telephony, internet television and thus by using these services the rural women can get much more empowered. Though Indians are the second users in terms of internet but in rural areas, there is an important issue, especially for women user base.

However, Wikipedia [28] highlights that in 2008, women significantly outnumbered men on most watch more streaming content. Such as MySpace, although the ratio varied the age" in a study it is also noticed that men are mainly interested in the professional blogs whereas women are interested to have a personal blog.

Conclusion—

The initiative of *'Internet Saathi'* is no doubt very much important and valuable in many contexts. It will be helpful for the improvement in the social computing and social informatics space. Significantly it is helpful for the improving information literacy and side by side digital literacy. India is moving towards a developing country and therefore this improvement in information sector will boost and help in many ways to become a true Digital India. The Digital Divide and its minimization are also positively possible with the project like *'Internet Saathi'*.

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