

## Editorial

“असतोमा सद्गमय । तमसोमा ज्योतिर् गमया । मृत्योर्मा मृतं गमय ॥”

(From ignorance, lead me to truth; From darkness, lead me to light; From death, lead me to immortality)

... Vhridaaranayak Upanishad

March 9, 2024, was a watershed moment in the history of school education in the country. Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, the Hon'ble Minister of Education, Government of India, launched 200 PM eVidya DTH TV channels for the country's children. These channels broadcast video content based on textbooks or related materials from the foundational stage to the secondary level in children's own languages. PM eVidya initiative was first announced by the Hon'ble Finance Minister, Government of India, on 17th May 2020 as part of Atma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan (ANBA) or Self-Reliant India Movement announced by the Hon'ble Prime Minister on 12th May 2020 during the COVID pandemic times with an aim to impart education by using technology to minimise learning losses. Initially, as part of this initiative, 12 PM eVidya DTH TV Channels for school education were launched with one DTH TV channel earmarked for one class, under what was termed as one class, one channel. The 12 PM eVidya DTH TV channels for school education were carved out of 34 SWAYAM PRABHA DTH TV channels launched in 2016 by the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India. The primary objective of PM eVidya DTH TV Channels for school education is to ensure easy access to education using television as a medium, which is an affordable and sustainable medium even in the remotest parts of the country. In a way it helps to bridge the digital divide. Later, the 12 PM eVidya DTH TV Channels were expanded to 200 DTH TV Channels in the Union Budget announcement of 2022-23 with a specific aim to enable all the states to provide supplementary education in various Indian languages and as per the State's own curriculum.

The government of India has allocated these channels to States / Union Territories (UTs) / Autonomous Bodies (ABs) and others. Out of 200, 5 DTH TV channels have been allocated to each State (except Manipur, which has been allocated 10 DTH TV channels); 1 each to UT except Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, which have been allotted 5 channels each; 1 each to autonomous bodies under Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSE&L), Ministry of Education (MoE), Government of India (GoI) (viz., KVS, NVS and CBSE – 1 each; while NIOS has been allocated 4, NCERT 14 and Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MoSDE), Government of India 6. At present, out of 200 channels, a total of 184 channels among 28 States, 7 UTs and 6 ABs have been allotted. NCERT, under the aegis of DoSE&L, MoE, GoI has been designated as the national nodal agency for 200 PM eVidya DTH TV Channels. For technical facility and effective coordination, Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geo-informatics (BISAG-N), Gandhinagar under the aegis of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Government of India is acting as national technical coordinator for transmission and telecast of the channels, which in turn has entered into an understanding with Doordarshan (DD) for co-branding these channels as DD-eVidya channels. 200 PM eVidya DTH TV Channels are Free-to-Air (FTA) / Direct-To-Home (DTH) and can be accessed in every household using DD Free Dish. The programs shared by States / UTs / ABs for telecast on the respective channels cover 28 languages, including Indian Sign

Languages (ISL). The PM eVidya initiative also has a dedicated feedback mechanism to support the learners. This feedback mechanism currently includes an Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) and class-wise-channel-wise email IDs for receiving queries and providing support to the learners.

Television transmission technology, the way it receives signals from a remote location, has undergone sea changes. In the 1930s and 40s, when TV was just invented, it used mechanical systems to scan images and transmit them. Later, when electronics came into being, the electronic analogue transmission was introduced. It improved TV viewing experiences. Colour TV made TV viewing more pleasant as transmission shifted from black and white to colour. The use of satellites to transmit TV signals over long distances has made broadcasting to a wider audience possible. In the 1980s and 90s, with the introduction of cable television, each household could receive more channels with better reception compared to over-the-air broadcasts. The shift from analogue to digital transmission, offering better picture and sound quality and more efficient use of bandwidth, has revolutionised TV viewing and has resulted in a significant increase in the number of viewers watching TV worldwide.

According to various reports, such as those from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and media research firms like Nielsen, global TV viewership has evolved significantly with the advent of new technologies. As of recent reports, approximately 4.1 billion people worldwide watch television regularly, including traditional broadcast TV and newer digital and streaming services. In India, as per the Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC), India, there are around 197 million television households in India. India has one of the largest TV viewership bases globally, with about 835 million viewers. According to the Census 2011, Delhi had the highest percentage of households having television ownership (88 %), while Tamil Nadu stood second overall (and first among States) with 87 % of households having TV ownership. Bihar had the lowest percentage of households having TV ownership (14.5 %), while Dadra, Nagar and Haveli, with 47 % of households having TV ownership, had the lowest percentage among the Union Territories. The national percentage stood at 47.2 %. According to broadcast India's TV Universe Estimates by BARC, this figure stood at 66 per cent in 2018.

There is an increasing recognition that educational broadcasting, under optimal conditions, can reach dispersed geographical areas and large populations, thereby bringing high-quality teaching to underserved areas. However, the crucial step lies in identifying and implementing these ideal conditions effectively. (Television in Education by Padmaja Shaw, published online 20 May 2016 pages- 198-204 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.2008.11726884>). According to Bradford L. Yates (published on 1 February 2004, DOI: 10.3138/SIM.4.1.003, corpus ID: 144308392), media literacy helps students develop critical thinking skills to analyze and evaluate media messages, promoting a deeper understanding of information and fostering informed decision-making, besides helping students with the necessary skills to navigate the digital world effectively, including understanding digital citizenship, online safety, and media production. During COVID lockdowns, when schools were closed down for a long time, and learning shifted online, using television for education emerged as a significant alternative to digital ways of reaching out to students. This alternative emerged swiftly because SWAYAM PRABHA was already in place. Moreover, technology evolves along and after the socioeconomic conditions of society. If there is diversity in the learners' base, then the technology to reach out to them should also be diverse, and this was the primary driver for the launch

of the PM eVidya initiative. The various stakeholders of this initiative should make these channels the second-best learning centres after the school classrooms.

In this issue of the journal, over 20 manuscripts have been accepted for publication across various categories that cover the educational technology related themes such as use of multimedia & eContent in social science studies, open schooling, universal design of learning (UDL), application of artificial intelligence (AI) in education, teacher education & ICT integration, mental health & tele-counselling, ICT & sustainable development, etc.

**(ABHAY KUMAR)**

**Editor**