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## Keeping pace with new technology

**Today our education does not end with school or college; we are lifelong learners due to ever-changing technology**

By K Jayshankar



Just when I learned to use the computer, they want to upgrade to Vista!

Have you heard people sigh in anguish when faced with new technology?

More than ever before, we live in a world where the rate of change is so rapid that our inadequacies get highlighted constantly. This is even more evident in the area of technology that seems to be all-pervasive in our society today. This inadequacy was restricted to the older section of society initially (the senior citizens), but today much larger numbers are feeling technologically challenged.

It all began with the computer that made an early appearance in offices in India in the 1970s. Then, the computer was this big mysterious creature, isolated from other employees in a specially isolated room, humming with air conditioners and managed by a special set of employees in gowned uniform.

Visitors to these locations were restricted and had to take off their shoes to go inside. This may seem strange now, but it was the norm in the few large corporations that were lucky enough to possess this expensive, gigantic mystery machine.

Over time, large computers gave way to mini-computers, but the true revolution started in the 1980s when slowly, the ubiquitous computer made its appearance across offices in its reincarnated form called the Personal

Computer (PC). In India, this became a friendly machine only in the 1990s when the PC began to proliferate and started becoming a feature in some homes.

At this stage, the computer was still the mysterious machine accessed by knowledgeable younger employees in office and bright youngsters at home. The most enterprising of the older generation happily began to switch as companies started organising computer classes. With the mushrooming of computer training institutes, the invitation began to be extended to parents of children also unravelling the mysteries and magic of this powerful machine. Soon Windows, Microsoft and of course, Bill Gates, became part of the vocabulary of a large number of middle class Indians.

The larger populace kept playing a catch-up game — as just when you had learned the rudimentary elements and begun practice to achieve mastery, the situation changed with a new version — purportedly more advanced — being launched. And you had to start all over again from the basics.

With the Internet making its appearance, the computer truly has become the powerful machine that it had once promised to be, with knowledge packets now a Google-stroke away.

In the midst of all this entered the cellphone. And SMS (Short Messaging Service or texting as the Americans call it) became the new rage. Slowly, the cellphone won over all of us as it became more affordable. Today, even grandmothers have become mobile savvy.

The question remains — is it sufficient to believe that education ends when we graduate from college or business school? The answer in today's times is a resounding no. Recognising the fact that technology has become the key driver in all aspects of our lives, continuous learning has become absolutely necessary. At home, we are constantly required to upgrade facilities as evidenced by microwave ovens, DVD players, dish antennas and the universal remote. At the office, software upgrades are keeping us on our toes.

In the medical world as well, specialised medicine has made it necessary for doctors to adopt continuous education courses. Willy-nilly, we are all now lifelong learners, proving the adage that learning is a continuous process, and to stop doing so will be the death-knell for us in today's world.

For a start, here are three steps that can keep us technologically relevant: learning from our children (Hello! Facebook); trying something new (check out You Tube, if you haven't done so yet); and, try your hand at gaming (even on your cellphone).

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