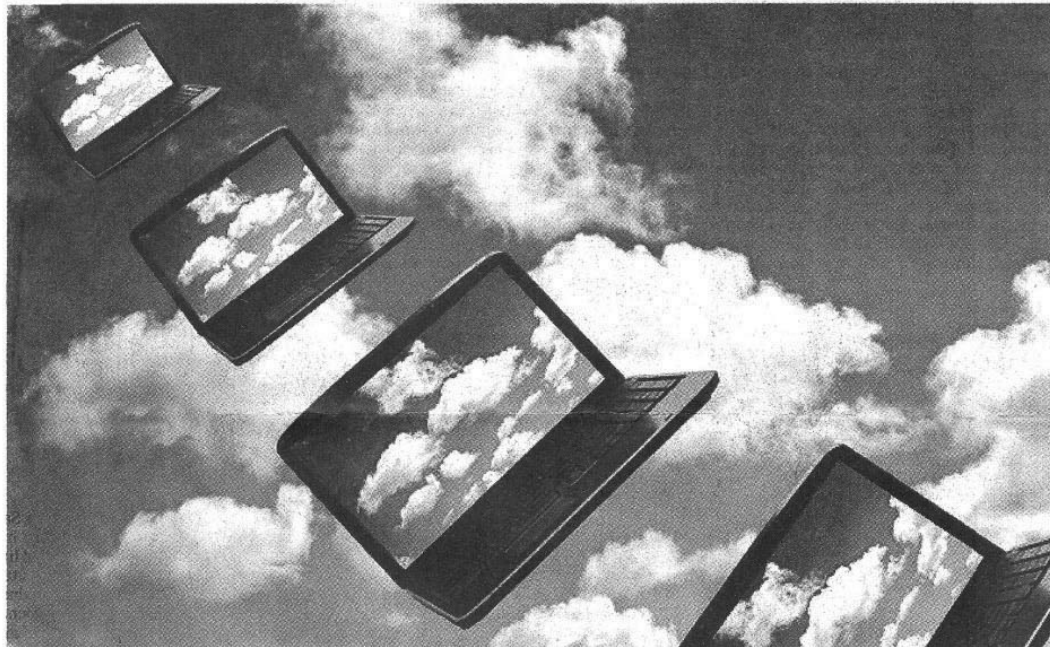## Business Standard, New Delhi
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THE BIG BLUE SKY, CLOUD COMPUTING AND YOU

The application is fast catching on with internet users in India

THINKSTOCK

PRIYANKA JOSHI

Ask a Yahoo Mail or Gmail user if they enjoy cloud services, and chances are that you will hear a puzzled reply: "What cloud? I just use Yahoo/Gmail."

Shridhar Venkat, a retired chartered accountant, is one among millions of cloud services consumers who use tools like photo sharing on Facebook and Picassa, but are unaware of what cloud computing is all about. "I use YouTube to listen to old film songs and since my PC does not have an Office software suite, I rely heavily on Google Docs for any online paperwork."

But Venkat is a beneficiary of cloud services in many ways. It has not only helped him lower his expenses – he did not have to invest in MS Office – while doing all his paperwork, presentations and spreadsheets, but keep himself updated with his daughter living abroad.

Cloud computing is a facility where you do not have to rely on the resources of a local computer, but use the computing resources and services on the internet. There is no one centralised location or organisation that controls them and nothing is required to utilise them besides a web browser and an internet connection.

Most of us have been using cloud services longer than enterprises. Consumer cloud applications like YouTube, Gmail, Yahoo, photo services like Flickr and Picasa, documents storage sites like Dropbox, peer-to-peer file-sharing protocol like BitTorrent, and peer-to-peer application like Skype that enables telephone calls over the internet, are just a few examples of how cloud computing usage has become part of our lives.

India's 80 million internet user base is growing at 20 per cent annually. Research firm Zinnov estimates that the cloud computing market in India is expected to reach $1.08 billion by 2015 — this translates into a ten-fold increase from the existing $110 million market.

Travellers purchasing tickets and arranging travel accommodations online were also taking advantage of the benefits of cloud computing. Manasvi Bhat, a 45-year-old school teacher, believes she is computer-savvy. "I am responsible for booking annual picnic tickets (railway) for my class, arranging the hotel stay and it's all done online. I have helped other teacher's book arrange travel tickets too." Although Bhat had heard about cloud computing, she was surprised to know booking tickets online was facilitated by cloud applications.

Leading IT trainer NIIT Limited joined the stream with its GNIIT programme that leverages cloud learning methodology. "NIIT Cloud Campus empowers the student to learn on his own terms, at his own pace, wherever and whenever he wants it. Students enjoy higher mobility as they can easily access educational services using a netbook or a mobile device that connects them to NIIT's cloud campus network," informs the company.

Recently, BlackBerry-manufacturer Research in Motion (RIM) announced it was teaming up with Microsoft for cloud-based storage. The new service, termed BlackBerry Office 365, will fully integrate with Microsoft's forthcoming Office 365, where users will have full and free access to each others' facilities.

Features will include calendar, contacts and video services, among others, that would be accessible from BlackBerry devices. On its official blog post, Microsoft described the agreement as being "a good deal for customers" and one that promises to deliver the "best productivity experience across the PC, phone and browser".

Earlier this month, Apple CEO Steve Jobs announced a new service called iTunes Match which, hosted via iCloud, almost makes Amazon and Google's cloud music applications look like child's play. In a nutshell, the iCloud allows you to buy music via any device offering iTunes, store up to 20,000 songs in iCloud and access these songs from any device connected to iTunes - iPad, iPhone, iPod or PC. While there is a free beta version available, for the full version there is an annual fee of $25. Technology giants like Apple are making sure cloud computing apps are here to stay.

The worry-some bit is that cloud hosting is still not considered secure enough against the threats from hackers and other unscrupulous people online. Since the cloud model is largely software-based (a virtual machine), analysts are concerned that it can be broken into with the use of bugs and viruses.

The problems of cloud computing came under limelight when Sony admitted that hackers broke into the 100 million Sony's Playstation users database and accessed personal information stored with the company.

Even software giants like Microsoft realised the threat from cloud computing and have joined the bandwagon. Microsoft has launched their online office system, SkyDrive to compete with Google. The biggest advantage of SkyDrive, according to Microsoft, is that it can seamlessly connect with Microsoft Office 2010 — allows users to use MSOffice 2010 to create and edit a file and save it using the Sky-Drive platform.

Even social networking sites like Facebook that allow consumers to use their storage, processing power and software from any location is an example of "public cloud," open to anyone with access to the internet.

COMPANIES LIKE MICROSOFT, APPLE are also joining the cloud computing bandwagon

Financial Chronicle, New Delhi
June 30, 2011

NIIT to revamp IT training delivery model

S SHYAMALA
Chennai

SKILLS training major NIIT is undertaking a major overhaul this year. A vital step in the direction is a complete digital transformation of its training delivery model. The company is aiming to get rid of the blackboard-classroom type of teaching over the next few years.

"Student preferences are changing; they are much more evolved in terms of technology. Nobody wants to do a general IT course anymore. Candidates are highly informed, very particular and looking for training in specific technologies and skills. We had to revamp our delivery model to match up to student expectations," said G Raghavan, chief executive of career building solutions, NIIT.

"We have already introduced the concept of complete digital learning in our three-year GNIIT course. All students are given laptops that come with pre-loaded content. We are consolidating our IT infrastructure, virtualising assets and putting content on the cloud to transform our delivery model. However, the main reason behind the exercise is improving profit margin. For the financial year ending March 31, 2011, NIIT (standalone) reported Rs 670-crore revenue (Rs 645 crore for the previous year) with Rs 50-crore net profit (Rs 31 crore for 2009-10). Virtualising and consolidating IT assets would result in direct bottom-line growth and long-term savings for the firm.

Deccan Chronicle, Hyderabad
June 22, 2011

Campus on the 'Cloud'

DC CORRESPONDENT

While the "technosphere" is still getting acquainted with the new concept of "Cloud Computing", the advancement has already insinuated itself into a variety of sectors, including the educational sector. Now, with NIIT offering what it calls "Cloud Campus," the students have never had it this good.

"It makes learning so much more easier. This is such a boon, especially since we are all pursuing dual qualifications, cloud computing has reduced the time we need for studying," claims Shilpa T., a student.

In the most basic terms, cloud computing refers to software and services that run over the Internet. The "cloud" is the Internet.

Shabarish, another GNIIT student says, "It feels great to work on such advanced technology.

Deepika Sharma echoes, "The best thing about cloud learning is that we have updated material on anything within seconds and we don't have to go out there and buy a new textbook."

NIIT's flagship "Cloud Campus" is proving to be beneficial for faculty, empowering teachers to constantly monitor students' activities. However, cloud learning comes with its share of baggage. Institutions need massive infrastructure while having crucial information online brings a set of tiers. Prakash Chandra Tiwari, the Center Business Head, NIIT Secunderabad, however, assures, "Everything is backed up and completely secure." Addressing fears that cloud learning may affect crucial skills such as note-taking, Geetha M., the Regional Delivery and Information Systems head, asserts, "Cloud learning is not a substitute for classroom learning."

Shabarish

Deepika

The Times of India, Chandigarh
June 22, 2011

TRAINING INSTITUTE

NIIT limited has recently announced the launch of its first NIIT One World centre in Coimbatore. NIIT One World is a training institute that will provide training to students and professionals across multiple domains, such as information technology including ERP systems, banking and finance, management and business process outsourcing. Career aspirants wanting to augment their formal education with career-oriented training, can come to NIIT One World centre and seek counselling across multiple domains and sectors.

This will enable them to take an informed career decision from various available options. NIIT One World centres will be equipped with state-of-the-art labs and infrastructure that enable hands-on practice, collaborative learning and comprehensive job-readiness.