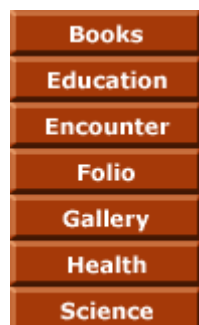


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[Front page of DAWN, Karachi, Pakistan, dated 25 Jan. 2002](#)



25 January 2002

Friday

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## Linux guru puts together a teaspoon of GNU training

By Frederick Noronha



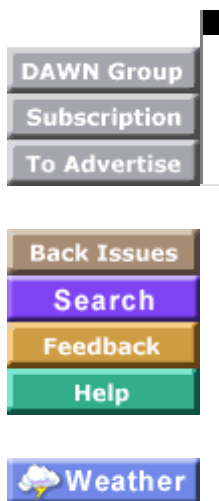
Spoon-feeding may be a term with unpleasant connotations. But a South Indian Linux guru has compiled a teaspoonful of training that could make it easy to understand and master the worlds best-known free Othat has many advantages and yet can also be difficult to get started on. Looking for an excellent one-stop resource for learning about Linux?

Want a handy one-stop answer for all your questions about Linux? Linux in a teaspoon, a one CD-ROM collection of tutorial material on Linux promises just that.

The title is inspired from the famous books titled xxx in a *nutshell* and exploits the metaphor of spoon-feeding; say the compilers behind this interesting product brought out from India, a country with considerable software skills where Linux is gaining growing attention in IT circles.

GNU/Linux in a teaspoon (Version 3) has been compiled by Algologic Research and Solutions, based in the city of Secunderabad, South India. As is prominently mentioned, this CD-ROM is for personal, academic usage only and not for any commercial exploitation. (Linux, or more accurately GNU/Linux, is a package of computer applications and an operating system, which functions as an alternative to Microsoft Windows or Apples MacOS.

Linux can replace Windows on your computer desktop, or Windows NT on your server.) Now, the two co-authors promise that this CD-ROM could be your introduction to the magic of GNU/Linux. Many users of this alternative Operating System, which is now taking even the business- world by storm, swear



by its efficiency once they get started on using it. But getting started can be tough.

Put together by Grenoble-educated engineering doctorate holder S Parthasarathy and a young GNU developer Raghuram, this is a useful product. On the CD are over 40 full-length text books and over 200 HOWTO documents covering every aspect of Linux in, what they authors call a profound but readable style. It also includes over 120 mini- HOWTOs and tons of tutorial material, plus numerous links and pointers to more resources on the world wide web. As if this were not enough, the CDROM also includes 70 issues of Linux Gazette.

To put this together, the team had to compile over 17,000 files in over 3,000 directories. They merged this all in a single, easy-to-use top-level navigational index. Its price at just Rs300 in India (around US\$7) is a modest enough price to basically meet copying, media costs, delivery and direct overheads only, say the authors.

Dr Partha, as he is called, is an active contributor to the Linux movement. Some of his contribution to the Linux documentation project have been translated into Japanese, Dutch and French. Raghuram is also the moderator of the Linux Users Group in the South Indian city of Hyderabad, the twin-city of Secunderabad. Doc Partha's style is interesting. In the homepage of the CDROM, he provokes the reader, suggesting you do not read the material that follows if you believe in certain myths about Linux.

For instance, he says, "Stay off if you believe Linux is no fun. Or if you buy the argument that Linux is hard to instal." Besides, we are also reminded, "dual boot bigamy is permitted in computing."

For each such myth, the doctor goes on to offer detailed answers why things are not so.

One gets a chance to see very attractive screen-shots of what's possible under Linux. Or to learn the exciting role played by Linux worldwide . . . say in propping up well-respected search engine Google.com. There are cartoons which poke fun at the rival OS (no prize for guessing which). The approach taken by this CD ROM is interesting standards are maintained. You're not even locked down to Linux to read it. Get the best out of the CDROM if Linux is installed. Otherwise too, you can browse HTML and PDF pages on other OSs, the reader is told.

It's preferable to go through the CD while being connected to the Internet. This allows additional information to be got through links provided. But, without this too, you can get lots of things to read and learn. This CD includes some very useful guidesbooks already published abroad, and often reproducible freely under GNU or other licences, quite unlike restrictive copyright policies that could make information unaffordable and out of reach of the Third World.

Some of this CDs material includes the Simple Users Guide for Linux, Learning Linux from Scratch, Learn Unix, and the much-appreciated RUTE to Linux. Useful back-issues of Linux Gazette, LinuxFocus and the like are also included. Other myths that Doc Partha systematically demolishes are: Linux is not manageable (by me). There are no applications software for Linux. Linux is just a



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black box. Linux is no good for real-time systems and embedded systems.

In putting this together, the Secunderabad team has also been careful about being rather subtle in promoting its own Linux-training courses... often in a polite, tongue-in-cheek manner. There are two or three references to the Linux services Algologic offers. (It has its own training coursea dosage of eight teaspoons of Linux, spread over two days.) But, at the same time youre also reminded that you can learn Linux by yourself, even though, as the authors put it, learning with them is the painless route.

### **Need more free advice?**

Algologics answer is: Do anything, ask anybody except Algologic. As the firm goes on to explain: We are actually overwhelmed by general enquiries about Linux. This CDROM should hopefully answer all your questions, or point to resources where you can find answers. In any case, do not send us any general enquiry about Linux. We do not answer such mail and inquiries. It offers many pointers though, and the firm also itself offers professionalpaid, that isadvice. This CD-ROM seems to be an interesting model of sharing its resources while still building up a route to earn the money that will keep up the companys bottom-line.

Says young co-author Raghuram, "Linux means 'Freedom'. Freedom of thought and freedom of using it according to your requirement. It's a way of life and once you are addicted you cannot change it, rather you wont feel like using any other operating system." He believes Linux makes on concentrate on skills rather than on your benefits, as they will surely come your way.

This CD-ROM could go quite some way to build up awareness about Linux in India,a country with ambitions of becoming a software superpower, where free and open source software is attractive for many reasons, not just the fact that it is affordable and piracy-free.

Taking this kind of initiative can be a good start for IT generation in Pakistan, too.

*For more info: <http://www.edesicool.com/forum/showthread.php?threadid=2222>*

 Previous



Next 

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