International Centre for Free and Open Source Software

VII Floor, Thejaswini, Technopark
Trivandrum-695006, Kerala, India
Email: info@icfoss.in, Web: http://icfoss.in

Message
(On the Occasion of Software Freedom Day 2013)

As software permeates extensively into the lives of people around the world, it is important to recognize the fact that human behaviour is increased predicated, influenced and modulated by software. While liberty and freedom have long been amongst the ideals of human civilization, it is not often understood that in a future where machines act on behalf of humans, freedom that humans are meant to have cannot be realized unless the software also upholds such freedoms.

The last two decades have seen an increasing tendency for large software enterprises to create black-box software that human users have little visibility into, or control over. In the rush towards deepening technology engagement—through an increasing number of technology artifacts ranging from computers, to mobile phones and tablets, to soon-to-become-reality "The Internet of Things"—not enough thought has been expended on checks and balances that need to be in place to ensure that the freedom of humankind is preserved through such invasive technological change in society.

Free and Open Source Software (FOSS) has, over the last two decades, shown that an alternative approach to software and related domains that upholds the values of freedom, participation, transparency and user rights, is not only feasible today, but is also cost-effective and robust. FOSS is an ethically superior alternative that accentuates the roles of individuals, communities and nations in the technology discourse, as opposed to merely those of enterprises and businesses. These latter are doubtlessly important for further technological development, but their interests needs to be balanced against that of society at large, and FOSS provides a robust platform for this. FOSS has inspired several technological and non-technological movements (such as Open Source Hardware, New Media, Open Access Publishing, Open Research, Open Source Engineering and Open Courseware to name a few)

Software Freedom Day, observed on 21 September for the current year, is an occasion for us to celebrate the emergence of FOSS as a mainstream technology option usable everywhere: at home, or for education, government & business. This day is important in reaffirming our support to FOSS, and to participate in one of its numerous offshoots, whether you are an engineer or a user.

As we transition towards a technology-driven society, it is important to remember this: *Software Freedom is Human Freedom*.

Satish Babu
Director, ICFOSS
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