

NEW MEDIA, CULTURE AND SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

The paper initiates with mankind, globalization and the contemporary mass media role played through multiple media approach at the dawn of third millennium and the need to address the challenge of technological pluralism. Then the concepts and influences of new media technologies related communications through the internet, cell phones, multimedia, gaming and animation, portals, etc, are enunciated. Perspectives of Culture, new media culture and its impact on society are dealt with. Later, the importance of studies on culture and relevance of technology in cultural studies are explained. The paper attempts to probe into the prevalent Communication Order/s if any, their acceptance or failures among nations worldwide and their possible thrusts towards advancement of culture(s) maintaining free and responsible media practices. Light is thrown upon the sociological divide and other factors affecting the digital access, the gap among sections of users [digital divide] and hence on the consequence of the divide on knowledge realization. Contradiction arising between such a divide and that of the dream of global village is established in the paper. Simultaneously, the debate of whether globalization can be realized through the culture of new media usages is also brought out. Ideas of convergence of media and the positive and negative effects arising out of it on e-communities are delineated. The subtle changing of the classical and practical definitions of communication into the post-modern versions is also observed with instances. The local cultures resulting out of specific pattern of new media utilities and the identities formed due to new media usages and pedagogical approaches in media education, especially in the teaching of new media related topics are subjected to analysis. Nuances in ideas and possibilities of media imperialism are checked for reality and on such a realization the feasibility of setting up of Global News Agenda is attempted.

Keywords: Globalization, Technological Pluralism, New Media, Culture, Convergence.

INTRODUCTION

Mankind made rampant progress in the 20th century. Then, science and technology made astonishing leaps to transform the world and redefine the daily assumptions of human life. Most of the inventions that define our present-day life and point to our potential for further progress were devised in that century. World going global led to concepts that have been accepted as points of no return and influencing even the less developed nations.

Mass Media activities have been commendable at any point of time of history in informing, educating or entertaining the people all over the world. Every media have had their share of effects on the society and has been responsible in their own way for changes in socio-economic and cultural aspects.

At the same time, when these mass media are viewed individually for their performances and effects, it is found that the birth of any other new mass media is a result of overcoming the shortcomings sighted in the earlier ones. Therefore it calls for the need to recognize the possibility of a plurality of mass media- high, intermediate and low, - co-existing and amenable for application to different sectors of economy and society. It needs to be recognized that all mass media are appropriate, contextually. *Endorsing technological pluralism is an important challenge of the twenty-first century.*

Computer mediated communication systems constitute an entirely new form of media called “collaborative mass media” which mixes elements of one-to-many information flow and many-to-many cooperative dialogue.¹ The new media technologies include the Internet, multi-media, portals, mobile phones, gaming & animation and many others.

Internet, the global community of millions of interconnected computer networks, connects private and public alike into an unregulated electronic community where millions of people linked together compute on the “information superhighway”. This network of networks links internationally tens of thousands of businesses, universities and research organizations with millions of individual users. Call it World-Wide-Web or cyberspace, what is vital is that it has made people communicate, do business, relax and live. As one of the new media technologies, the internet has revolutionized the concept of mass media.

Multimedia, yet another part of the new media uses a combination of different content forms of different media, in contrast to media that only use traditional forms of printed or hand-produced material. Multimedia includes a combination of text, audio, still images, animation, video and interactivity forms. It also describes electronic media devices used to store and experience content. Multimedia is distinguished from a mixed media in fine art. The term “rich media” is synonymous for interactive multimedia. ‘Hypermedia’ can be considered one particular multimedia application.

Mobile telephony has dramatically altered the forms of human communication and interaction through space and time (Mörtberg, 2003). As a giant new media, mobile phones occupy an integral place in young people's lives, not as a means of social differentiation but as a necessary part of social communication through the maintenance of key social networks. For adolescents, mobile phones offer the possibility of transgressing parental and other authority (Fortunati, 2002), of demonstrating maturity (Steggles and Jarvis, 2003 cited in May and Hearn, 2005), a means of negotiating spatial and parental boundaries (Liccoppe, 2004, Williams and Williams, 2005), and avoiding parental surveillance (Thompson and Cupples, 2008) which, is assumed to be less likely for young adults who have left home. In 1995, cell phone arrived in India, with a target set that in five years it should increase five times its initial numbers. In Oct. 2005, India had 68 million users of cell phones.²

Creativity and cognition has got immense boost due to digital cultural communication in the form of Animation and even gaming industry today. Today the new media technologies have users in more than 200 countries.

It was in 1995, commercial internet access in India was launched. In 1998, due to launch of private ISPs, the number of users had crossed one million. The internet in India has grown in terms of access by over 30% in the year 2002. By 2005, about 50 million people accessed the Internet. In the Asia-Pacific region (excluding Japan), India is next to China in terms of total number of Internet users. There has been a sudden spurt in the growth of internet cafes as well as users in schools, colleges and offices.

Continuing the techno-spree, most of the major Indian news publishers are integrating SMS and voice portal services with mobile devices quite successfully— including stocks quotes, weather, horoscopes, news headlines and cricket scores. Some Indian news sites have also moved away from the free to fee based model for content access. The Net has emerged as a serious media option among the Indian youth, according to a study by Optimum Media Solutions (OMS), the media arm of Mudra Communications, conducted among 340 individuals in the 18-25 age group in the five largest cities.³

Numerous activist and environmental organizations in India are using the Net to disseminate news and advocate their causes. For instance, sites like *SecularIndian.com* have used the Web to mobilize signature campaigns and call for peace during times of inter-religious conflict.

In India, the site *Tehelka.com* exposed corruption in the political and military establishments by capturing on video, defense officials accepting bribe for arms contracts— a great example of online investigative journalism. The Indian IT Act- 2000 covers cyber laws for issues like digital certificates and use of digital documents.

Silent Revolution

As a whole, there is a silent revolution from New Media. It is extensively or intensively used by professionals, corporates, domestic services, Internet media users, observers, specialists and even common man. The e-books are a hit on the Web. Newspaper-on-the-net has now been recognized as a major vehicle to transmit news. The New Media impact along the news value chain has affected the way the professionals work. It could be news consumers, journalists, editors, business managers, advertisers, marketers, PR agencies, alternative media activists, educators, academics, government & national policy makers.

The Projections of the New Media Industry in India amidst other mass media is as under:-

India: Media Segments

Segment	2008 (\$ billion)	2013 (\$ billion)	Per cent CAGR
Television	4.81	9.45	14.5 per cent
Print	3.45	5.32	9.0 per cent
Film	2.18	3.37	9.1 per cent
Animation	0.35	0.79	17.8 per cent
OOH	0.32	0.59	12.8 per cent
Gaming	0.13	0.55	33.3 per cent
Internet	0.12	0.43	27.9 per cent
Radio	0.16	0.33	14.2 per cent
Music	0.14	0.21	8 per cent

Source: KPMG-FICCI Report

Indian Media and Entertainment Industry

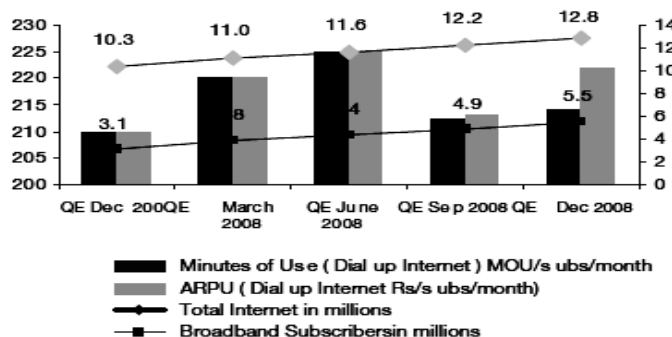
Year	Size (\$ billion)	Per cent Growth
2005	7.72	-
2006	8.9	15.28 Per cent
2007	10.4	16.85 Per cent
2008	11.68	12.31 Per cent
2009	12.56	7.53 Per cent
2010	13.94	10.89 Per cent
2011	15.82	13.49 Per cent
2012	18.22	15.17 Per cent
2013	21.04	15.45 Per cent

CAGR for 2009-13: 12.5 Per cent

(Source: KPMG-FICCI Report)

New media has added new dimension to the users by placing within easy reach, a mind-boggling range of information. It gives each of us many options to cultivate consumption of information and views. And as the numbers of people on them multiply, the opportunities are getting larger.

Chart 6.3: Broadband subscribers



Source: TRAI

reporters regularly use the Web to research background information on stories. PR agencies operating with e-mail-based press releases on behalf of their clients are common place now. Also, some PR practitioners even wirelessly deliver media reportage briefs to their clients via terse SMS messages each morning.⁴

New media, new Avatar

Many studies reveal facts on its usage, which is continuing to expand rapidly, with thousands of systems adopting New Media standards every year. According to Arvind Singhal and Everett Rogers (2001) ‘No other nation like India provides a better example of the role of the new communication media in the development, process through which a country moves from being an agriculture-based economy towards becoming an information society’.

The CAGR of new media through the years:-

Table 1.6 : Global Entertainment and Media Market by Segment (US\$ Millions)

Segment	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008p	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	CAGR 2009-13
Internet Access: Wired and Mobile	110,370	136,588	162,394	190,425	214,601	226,221	238,450	262,360	296,387	333,628	9.2%
% Change	21.9%	24%	18.9%	17.3%	12.7%	5.4%	5.4%	10.0%	13.0%	12.6%	
Internet Advertising: Wired and Mobile	17,922	26,795	38,696	51,813	59,873	58,717	60,241	65,654	74,972	86,728	7.7%
% Change	43.7%	49.5%	44.4%	33.9%	15.6%	-1.9%	2.6%	9.0%	14.2%	15.7%	

Table 6.18: Projected growth of the Indian Animation and Gaming Industry 2009-13

Rs. billion	2008	2009 f	2010 f	2011 f	2012 f	2013 f	CAGR 2009-13
Animation Industry	15.6	18.5	23.0	27.6	33.6	42.5	22.2%
% Change	20.0%	18.6%	24.3%	20.0%	21.7%	26.5%	
Mobile Gaming	2.5	3.0	4.5	6.0	10.1	12.1	36.89%
% Change	67.6%	19.3%	51.5%	33.0%	66.4%	20.2%	
PC	0.4	0.6	0.7	0.8	0.9	1.0	20.6%
% Change	28.6%	44.4%	23.1%	18.8%	10.5%	9.5%	

New media developments have influenced the global communication processes. Several significant studies all over the world during the turn of the new millennium, on the impact of new media reveal many interesting facts. A study on the on-line advertising found that individuals liked the feeling of exercising control over what they wanted to see, and the ability to tap into vast amounts of information on diverse topics. Graphics and images were found to enhance their experiences. Another study indicates that Internet use has a positive contribution to scholarly productivity. The results of a study in the Asian nation of Thailand indicate that students and faculty did not use the Internet extensively for communication.⁵ Student respondents lacked the necessary skills for communicating on the Internet and did not perceive the Internet as an educational communication tool, whereas faculty respondents did! The study suggests that technical difficulties, language and cultural barriers hinder student use of the Internet.⁶ One more study on instruction in higher education revealed that students exhibited higher order reasoning and thinking skills in these courses (Bloom's taxonomy). Studies conducted to know the feasibility of undertaking researches on Internet recommend the need for widespread computer accessibility, for instruction in Internet use and information evaluation, for faculty involvement, and for faculty-librarian collaboration in promoting responsible, informed and appropriate use of the Internet as a research option.⁷

Global communication has far-reaching implications for business methods, design and manufacturing techniques and the way individuals interact, travel, entertain themselves, obtain information and communicate (Saxby, 1990). Wiseman (1998) describes the world, at this present time, as one where "time and space have been so dramatically compressed that distant actions in one corner of the globe have rapid and significant consequence on people and places far away?"

Table 6.14: Projected growth of Indian Internet Advertising Industry 2009-13

In Rs. billion	2008	2009 f	2010 f	2011 f	2012 f	2013 f	CAGR 2009-13
Online Advertising	5.0	7.5	9.0	11.5	15.0	20.0	32.0%
% Change	85.2%	50.0%	20.0%	27.8%	30.4%	33.3%	
Internet share in ad pie	2.3%	3.2%	3.4%	3.9%	4.6%	5.5%	19.8%

Source: Industry estimates and PwC analysis

Usage of Internet access in India

Purpose of Internet Access	%
E-mail	91%
General Information Search	76%
Educational Information Search	49%
Text Chat	46%
Online Gaming	41%
Online Jobsites	37%
Music/Video on the Internet	30%
Financial Information Search	21%
Book railway tickets on the Internet	21%
Online banking	20%
Online news	13%
Internet Telephony / video chat / Voice chat	13%

Source: I-cube 2008, IMAI

Daily life is often affected by the actions of other countries (Grieg, 2000), from places such as Paris, London, Milan, New York or even through the internet in cyberspace. Global communication reaches far and wide and in doing so many kinds of relationships occur globally (Cairncross, 2001).

Romances occur on the internet without physical or visual contact (Wiseman, 1998). International trade occurs every minute, an example being Ebay which connects people from Argentina, Austria, Australia, Belgium, just to name a few (Ebay, 2004). People communicate with friends and relatives via technologies. There is a sense of being close connection to distant people and places, yet also a sense of isolation. (Wiseman, 1998)

Thus there has emerged a new kind of global community, one that has increasingly become a force in international relations (Garson, 1995). With the advent of the fax machine, telephones, international publications, and computers, personal and professional relationships can be maintained irrespective of time and place. Communication relationships are no longer restricted to *place*, but are distributed through *space*. The global community has the opportunity to know more than before as the media increasingly has the ability to provide people with a great deal of second hand knowledge about not only the world at large but also the society we live in (Greig, 2000).

The decentralisation of technologies, commercialisation and control, mean that through computers, fax-machines, amateur radio, packet data satellites, VCRs or video cameras, people will communicate without government control or major transnational corporations (Wiseman, 1998). They are decentralised because they democratise information flow, break down hierarchies of power and make communication from top to bottom just as easy as from horizon to horizon. (Frederick, 1993)⁸

Observers think that corporations and technology advancements, not governments, will shape the future internet era of central interest are global news organizations whose content is altering to allow for local content, rather than global, homogenous news. (Reshaping World Communications, 2004)

Culture and its facets

Culture, etymologically enunciated means a set of habits which is cultivated consistently, i.e., cultivated habits over a period of time. Culture of one time need not be the culture of another time in history. As a whole, the day-to-day life style led by communities in societies of different geographies aggregate to different cultures. Some of today's life styles connected concepts of culture are work culture, corporate culture, media culture, mass culture, cultural hegemony, etc.

Mathew Arnold, a great literary critic in his book *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) says, "Culture knows that the sweetness and light of the few must be imperfect until the raw and unkindly masses of humanity are touched with sweetness and light." Cardinal Neumann, another expert on society and culture puts the word 'Gentleman' equivalent to 'Cultured'. R.W.Emerson, a great poet and lyricist looks into culture as an ornament to one's personality. T.S.Eliot's work *Notes towards the definition of culture* reflects the life of man while he feels that the machines and technology sicken the innocent, clean life of man and make him lost, Indian culture can give back such a lost life. As a whole the forte of the culture of western and European nations lies in unstinted cultural practices of discipline, time sense and high individual liberty.

The orientalist believe that when it holds good for the economically weak or backward, the dictum "what if poor world wise, we are very rich spiritually and culturally". D.V.Gundappa, poet and cultural philosopher of India, believes that culture is a very complex phenomena and needs hardships and sacrifices to achieve it. The culture of the eastern nations, by and large has been based on the principles of collectiveness, patience, tolerance and peacefulness, with no exception to India.

Culture is also connotative with traditions and customs followed by particular societies. *However, in the current context, this perspective blurs the discussion of cultural impact of*

new media technologies. For academic debate, it is the new media culture that has an impact on the day-to-day lives of people all over the world. It is to be observed that the inherent nature of all new media is comprehensively global by reach, access, communication, change, progress and development. Hence the discussion is taken among the objectives of this study.

Cultural Studies and technology

Technology change resulting in urgent changes on human life, by the beginning of 21st century has dictated the life-styles forcing inevitable acclimatization. Change in life-styles has blurred the existing cultural practices and the facets of it have undergone severe changes. So, formal studies of the cultural changes are inevitable to avoid paranoid and apprehensions.

Surprisingly, despite being heavy users of new media, non-elite urban middle-class men continue to be attached to previous family arrangements. The striking continuity of non-elite and their gender culture in the face of new meanings introduced by foreign media suggests that institutions are fundamentally important in rooting the fit between cultural orientations and institutional structures. Social theorists today often emphasize the mutually reinforcing nature of culture – meanings, norms, values – and structure – the way society is organized. But contemporary theorists too often sidestep consideration of the relative causal importance of cultural and structural factors.

Theoretical framework

According to critique Swidler “consistencies across individuals come less from common inculcation by cultural authorities than from the common dilemmas institutional life poses in a given society.” Changes resulting from globalization are then, more likely to follow from the changed structural realities than the introduction of new cultural meanings.

Scope of the study

The high potential new media affects life-styles & culture of regions and people. More than studying the existing effects of the new media on societies it is of higher importance to address some crucial issues pertaining to the relevance of some practices under new media that seem to pose risks or dangers on living patterns, organized living, international understanding and consistent comfortable survival of the earth. Hence, this study critically views for practicality of Global Communication Orders and the lack of a comprehensive communication policy, particular to India. Through metamorphosis of media and societal effects, the Digital Divide and Knowledge gaps are noted. Tendencies towards Cultural Globalization and the effects of new media on Local Cultures and Identities are observed.

Significance of the Study

This study assumes importance in post modern world where it seems like technology and media together are forming a nexus to create a situation of waging a virtual war on mankind. Though it is man who is the creator of the current situation, it now seems like robo-sapiens v/s homo-sapiens. So, who else but humans should be on alert mode to maintain upper hand over machines and be clear about culture and life-styles adopted among societies? It is thus time to critically analyse the existing scenario and practices to give a direction as intended by the human kind.

Statement of the problem

If new media technologies have any cultural impact, then how and why are the new media affecting the culture and changing the society?

OBJECTIVES

General

1. To study the new media practices and its bearing with cultural changes in societies.
2. To understand the global communication pattern under new media technologies

Specific

1. To probe into the prevalent Communication Order/s if any, their acceptance or failures among nations and their possible thrusts towards advancement of culture(s) maintaining free and responsible media practices.
2. To analyze the sociological divide due to digital divide.
3. To check whether globalization can be realized through the culture of new media usages.
4. Look into new media utilities affecting local cultures

The study under the theme 'the cultural impact of new media technologies' is titled 'new media, culture and society' wherein the methodology is of critical study.

The 'impact' affects not only individuals and communities, but also the regions, nations and societies anywhere in the globe to reveal ominous changes, positive or negative, with a slight change due to the effects of new media practices and portrayals in a society of even any one region. If an Indian in the USA is caught posting porn sites links to his friend from his office PC and is arrested under law, the shame shakes the whole Indian society.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The Internet opened up lots of potential for public domain content, especially in the government-citizen relationship.⁹ New media of today is not of an overnight phenomenon. This Media Convergence happened in phases. The surge, merge and the urge for media multiplicity probably began with the rush in communications satellites in the space. It paved way for the real expansion of electronic media, both TV and radio. Due to this rush, even Print media saw drastic, unpredictable changes in its style and content. Above all, the emergence of new media technologies gave full definition to the convergence of media, as is today.¹⁰ The after effects of convergence are considered very huge on all walks of life. Some of its effects are beneficial while some of its impact such as on culture is still questionable. The convergent media has its share of supreme impact on urbanization and industrialization too. The different societies have become complex to understand each other.

With the Target Audience of the various media of the current times, the entire exercise has boiled down to mere entertainment. The prime purposes with which mass media were realized by man, i.e., to educate the masses, has today taken a back seat. Most surveys on the reach of messages to the audience show that media is consumed mostly for entertainment. Today's media has become a toy.

Metamorphosis of media and societal effects

Indeed surprisingly, in India, it was simultaneous growth of every media that has worked with coherent growth and sustenance within the limited economic strength and contribution to the national exchequer. The story of media progress is of an unsystematic growth. When the social condition of majority of the Indians was highly imbalanced and mass media entered and tried to play a role, it had disastrous effects and impact than taking progressive or developmental mode.

Mighty mass media put their pug mark on the soil when the Indian society suffered with lack of scientific knowledge, social inequality and blind beliefs. It soon led to an unbalanced situation

scientifically. In the name of media activity, technology was imposed on this dark society, where a minority was exposed to read and write. More or less, it continues to be so even now.

The mighty Cinema, perceived then as an unbelievable mode of communication had a hypnotic effect on Indian audience and consumers. It was just an emotional attachment & surrendering to the media due to the stun of it! The Indian movie producers exploited the situation well. They earned profits by touching the aspects of Indian mythology [indeed a boon to this technology] they converted people into spellbound audience who worshipped the silver screen. Soon, the themes of Kalingamardhana, Krishna, Ravana,...crept into the media themes. *Even today, multimedia, animation and many other new media tools have eased these processes of creating the characters with much increased effects and immensely high quality.*

Radio, an intimate media right from its inception on Indian soil, however saw very unsystematic growth and development for many decades. It is of LPG dimensions that radio is rejuvenated through FM stations, yet far from realization of proportionate size of community radio services in a vast nation like India. *New Media has wonderfully incorporated the features of this audio mass medium and has given many leads like internet radio.*

Television was a high degree entertainment right at the door and into the bedrooms. Ramanand Sagar's Ramayan, B.R.Chopra's Mahabharat and so many similar mega efforts were easily mesmerizing on the audience even while the people were absolutely not prepared with visual literacy, lagging in understanding the visual dynamics of a mass media! Today, New Media Technologies are rampantly used in this mighty electronic media. *Today, IP-TV, HDTV . . . are simply a common place.*

There are two extremes in today's kinds of messages delivered by media. One- the extreme serious kind, relevant and important to people, but portrayed in unduly sensational manner just because it is serious, however this is uncalled for. The other is of frivolously lighter and bordering on trivial and the cheap. In such a scene of post technological information explosion, the actual increased numbers of computer sets, TV receivers & channels, etc., is questionable. A great strength of Indian society is its capability of absorbing any culture from anywhere. Also, some influences are only transitory. However, transnational media has caused enough damage in some areas of Indian culture. The language, behaviour, thinking, costume and life-style are displaced and irrelevant to circumstances and progress. Yet, these effects are all confined to urban areas. These effects have concentrated onto dense populated areas and are unsuccessful in reaching vast rural areas. There is not even entry of so called media culture into rural populace, of course because of various factors.

Technology might have helped uploading fast information like forecasting weather conditions and improving agriculture. But so far as cultural fabric is concerned, new media [even no media] has reached out to rural areas. A good example for information pollution is, all our modern magazines with sophisticated newsprint of export quality that remain merely as a status symbol rather than its content being assimilated. The purchasing power has probably increased, eg:- Access to DTH, sophisticated cell phones. It doesn't mean all channels are being watched or all pages are being read. So, without ingesting comprehensive messages and by mere presence of the signals of large content, it is not true that technology will complete the information reach and assimilation of messages.¹¹ Only circumstantially, messages are digested. Most messages or signals even disappear in the information explosion and so doesn't yield any fruit under the defined communication process.

Here is a case study about a pulse polio campaign in Bangalore, India. Government of India, with its Ministry of Health, in coordination with different state governments, harped on the eradication campaign, wherein a media campaign was carried out for 3 months announcing the date of administering the drops to kids. About 90 days of campaign including newspapers, e-media, film theatres, print and folk media were used in a survey in the residential pocket of Asia's largest residential layout, Jayanagar. More than 52 % of mothers were asked about the knowledge of where and when the pulse polio will be administered in their localities. In spite of widespread nursing homes and hospitals available in such a sophisticated area, all such mothers found the information of such a campaign completely new and surprising! They all rushed to the nearby drops administering kiosks

only after knowing the information from the researchers! Even as New Media was being used for this campaign! All these point to a fact that procrastination is the basic psyche of the urban, metro lifestyle.

It is the same with voting awareness among urbanites. By a survey from Business & Economy group, the date of voting remained a surprise in spite of frequent shouting by most media.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

About Global Communication Orders

The New World Information & Communication Order [NWICO] is an outcome of many fears, both political and social. It signified a transition between the world orders. Though it had minimal effects on mass media functioning, it was to address the questions of the earlier world. The perspectives by the respective 3rd-world nations about the reportage of media, particularly the news agencies of the developed world on events and issues were found to be distorted, biased or missed on empathy of the masses. The interpretations in the news stories on any issues lacked the understanding in depth and in being nearer to the local ethos. These news flow imbalances led to the forceful designing of their own indigenous news agencies and independent press organizations by the third world nations. Their efforts resulted in AWWA, NAPNA, MENA and so on. It was obvious that the developed nations were ambitious of their continued profits. The recognizable turn out from WARC [World Audio Research Conference] – Summit under the initiative of UNESCO and its effects between 1976 -82 gave fresh perspectives for media functioning of the developing nations. Also the call from UNESCO- *Many voices, one world* echoed by McBride recommended through his report of the commission further emphasized the need for balanced and accurate news flow mechanisms.

The flow of information without even technological biases was still a far cry for LDCs. Propaganda agents like BBC, the psychological military aggression waged on the III-world by the Hollywood 007-movies and its ruthless market defocused the efforts of the third world on properly channeled media content flow mechanisms. Media was rampantly used as propaganda machinery for the cold war too. Communication Satellites entry to the media functioning gave a ray of hope to the LDCs initially however soon masked by tactful, devious strategies of the media of the developed nations. The parallel development of super computers and spy satellites by these nations had blurred the systematized news flow mechanisms in media. Soon, to standardize space utility, the ITU was formed. The invention of the New Media technologies basically for military purposes, however soon for the media purposes is a drastic development in the post-modern scenario.¹² As far as the developing nations were concerned, it only increased the digital divide till date.

Lack of Policy

Right to freedom of press and right of the professionals is important. However, media should not forget that confidence reposed by the communities is equally important. Media owes a lot to community; it should be conscious of what to give, how to nourish; it should amount to a meaningful symbiotic relationship. Hence, every nation should have framed communication policy. It was reiterated by the McBride Commission report. Unscientific growth of media, particularly in nations like India, with the absence of communication policy will have drastic effects on status of Indian media. Indian electronic media was a propagandist machine of the central govt. till the invasion from the skies. In any developing situation, the triangle of entertainment, information and education is a must. Policy makers without realising importance of a 'policy', acted according to whims and fancies, tried to control the information mechanisms that affected a lot to the healthy growth of media industry in India. In the absence of comprehensive Cyber Laws, there is every possibility that the same situation may arise to the New Media in future.

The Digital Divide and Knowledge gap

In terms of development of nations, the new divide in the world is between the high-tech countries and the low-tech (or even no-tech) countries. "You can tell the rich from the poor by their Internet

Connection”, says an expert in a column of *The New Indian Express* daily. Already, the spread of information has had a direct impact on the degree of accountability and transparency of Governments’ developmental functioning around the world. There are probably many reasons for this divide, but one crucial reason is, that the knowledge gap embracing- information, education and access to technology, is widening. According to Dr. T.K. Oommen, an academic, “Ours is a world when dollar signs, Gross National Product (GNP) tables are no longer only elements dividing the haves and have-nots.”¹³

New media technologies made it possible to gain infotainment, strike businesses and fortify relations at low cost with high speed to everybody. But to process all this information, understand the same and to implement, is a work of knowledge; and Information is not knowledge. Though New Media has become a necessity of today’s life, social justice, economic equity, political decentralization and humane philosophies are more important and, these cannot be extracted out by any technology. The answer lies in how we use these tools to address our problems.

When we watch the increasing developments and changes in the New Media and think about it, the obvious questions arise as to whether these changes are for good or bad and whether to welcome or boycott or control it. The pseudo-reality that Information Technology and New Media bring into existence appears to be only a pretext for making our life tolerable. With the new media spreading at such a fast pace, many questions, just for instance, ‘*Is Illiteracy going to diminish?*’ will have to be answered. Father of sociology of communication Marshall Mc Luhan through his essay titled “Five Sovereign Fingers Taxed the breath . . .” has gestured towards the realization of the concept of global village and is justified as new ideas and softwares are constantly being developed & promising to make New Media a way of life.

Tendency towards Cultural Globalization

New Media is increasingly breaking down geographic borders and locations leading to closer interaction. Many familiar tools like 3G, video-chatting, sms, e-mails, blogging, micro-blogging and social networking have proved themselves to be the fastest and powerful *communication tools* [convergence] in modern times. Today, the new media not only saves space but also ensures data longevity. This ability to receive, download and send information and the capacity to share the same, without censorship or restriction have the inherent potential in furthering sustainable development, especially for developing countries. New Media is extensively & universally used by e-communities all over the world as a resource to help generate ideas by means of communication. So, the very definition of mass communication is acquiring a new dimension. The users are included in the term *media audience* meaning an aggregate of persons of a conventional group.

New Media has the potential danger of electronic crimes, pornography, from illegal reproduction of softwares to the mishandling of electronic systems and illicit intrusion into them(hacking), from copyright infringement to electronic plagiarism.¹⁴ ‘As global communication on the new media threatens to overtake sex as a pass time, the very future of ‘mass media’ itself, and of profession, might be perceived to be in jeopardy.’¹⁵ The new media has potential dangers in making us lazy, block social communication or create a separatist society, pop-up fundamental changes in our values. Morality, by a definition is culturally transmitted rules of right and wrong conduct establishing the basic terms of social life. But the e-communities are a world community with mass culture. Therefore the aspect of right-hood or wrong-hood itself deserves a serious rethinking.¹⁶

The benefits and pitfalls of the new medium are explored compared to Print. Limitless sources and their faster access through the hyperlink feature, less pressure of deadlines, more freedom makes the Online aspect an upper hand over conventional Print Media. ‘On matters of influencing public and media agendas, it is evident that mainstream reporter or editor directly do not serve public at large but only economic necessities of corporations that wire and pay them...’ says Tom Koch.¹⁷ Internet has made it possible for ‘complete decentralization of control’ of mass communication system. ‘In cyberspace, everyone is his or her own reporter...’ says James Watson, media educationist and journalist. However, affordability, accuracy in reporting, information control and historical chronicling are still the strengths of the conventional media.

Yet the System is not perfect. New Media causes panic as anyone anywhere can put anything onto it leading to a preponderance of what some call garbage. There are problems of adaptation such as paranoiac attitudes in the usage of the new media by common man. These very disadvantages are seen as pointers to the new media's potential as a free global forum of unrestricted information and interactive communication. Besides, the value of useful information is considered to be superior as to outweigh the wastefulness of garbage.

On Local Cultures and Identities

Communication is not just for merchandise; it is for social good and public service for a participative dialogic community. New Media's contribution to such communication is immense and phenomenal. "Telephony development . . . is generally by and for the elite groups . . . primarily confined to the more modern and urban areas of society . . .", it is quoted in a book on the future of mass communication.¹⁸ But the rural India is fast catching up in the use of technology and exploitation of science is already known to the rural society. Moreover, the change in the rural life-style had never been so drastic ever since the dawn of the new millennium. So it becomes imminent to monitor the effects of New Media in the rural sectors too. A comparative study of usage pattern between urbanites and ruralites also reveals the inner transitions of information flow and therefore throw more light upon the functions of mass communication. Only if we will blend the life-style with the fundamental strengths of New Media, survival and revival of conventions and traditions for meaningful living is possible.

Media education involves media literacy, its various dimensions like awareness, behavioural aspects, etc. and not mere universities or not even only research. While the status of higher education is still to be nourished, the fate of media education is much more abysmal.¹⁹ With class room situations lacking basic infrastructure, it is a far cry that internet connectivity and computer systems made accessible for majority of the aspirants of media education anywhere in the country like India. Where affordability exists, seriousness among the seekers is widely missing; with serious and needy aspirants, the access to the technology is deprived. Social prejudices, hierarchy and even the bureaucracy are all the reasons for such a situation.

As media imperialism is in no sight with the existing scenario of Indian new media scene as analyzed through this study. Hence, the feasibility of setting up of Global News Agenda by the transnational media is very low as it would not be inclusive without Indian players forming major stakes in the game. Only time can tell as to such a possibility in future.

INFERENCES & CONCLUSION

The new media growth is too quick for a subcontinent like that of India, with other parameters of economy, education, technology being asynchronous with the media boom. The behaviour of people, their thinking, the family, the joint family system, the dress culture has all seen too many variations in very short time, becoming a vexation to the spirit of inquiry in the homo-sapiens. Social networking is simply redefining human communication and relationships; Because of social networking sites, auto-sexual behaviour of new-media is thought to be safer; hypodermic communicating styles of the female kind and the magic-bullet kind of the male, both are found to inherently co-exist in social networking. On the contrary, the misuse of MMS, rampant time-wasting chatting, disturbing sms messages, hacking, porn, plagiarism, e-mail bombing have all become cause of concern. AIDS- in spite of the campaigns, it is simply on the rise; In the Convergence era, the new media along with its technologies, the internet, mobile phones have all entered absolutely with no plan of entry into India; this has resulted in extreme pornography and rampant cyber crime. Blogging is bordering on bragging for Indians.

When it comes to bridging the digital divide, it is the mobile, not the computer that India is betting on. Earlier only through facsimile, transnational media was functioning wherein as-is-so-is versions were available in India. After LPG, FDI made the Indian advertisement revenue go directly into transnational media and lose its money bag and revenue.

Information explosion has resulted in information pollution. ISP regulation in India is confined to authorities like the TRAI which has limited scope and control. It should be widened to include many updated technologies and regulatory mechanisms. The recent Blackberry [2009] servers were not in the watch by Indian regulators and were a panic time for internet users. It was feared that terrorists could tamper with the situation and misuse the circumstances.

SUGGESTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Communication policy should be clear, especially in a developing situation. Absence of communication policy has affected growth of technology and also maturity of readers, listeners or viewers. If only a policy with some of the riders or checks and balances were made, it will conserve the national economy and it could improve the gains of media too. Hence, **Regulation, Not Control** should be the mantra. Media's prime work is to set agenda for next generation. In the absence of a policy, even defence of the country is slowly dismantled.

Also observation is that the objectives of one media while being met to certain extent, in the absence of communication policy, during entry of every other media, it will eat into the objectives of the existing media thus hampering the smooth transition. As per Wilbur Schramm's dictum 'No mass media can exist in cultural vacuum'. For a diverse culture like in India, a combination of a national policy along with regional [of the states] policy will augur well for smooth functioning of various media.

To mitigate the digital divide in India, costs of Internet access, education about the Net, and local language interfaces must be made affordable. Technology and content companies play a key role here. Specifically, there is need to focus on the impact of new media as progressive tool of communication in modern society, analyze the contributions of new media for social change, assess the role of new media communication in culture, find out the threats associated with new media communication from cultural point of view; and finally suggest appropriate measures towards using new media communication as an instrument of cultural change.

'Teacher precedes the student' holds good only with respect to training aspect. It is also a challenge for the product manufacturers to maintain cost-effective quality gadgetries if skills have to be imparted to the student community. Continuous workshops, seminars and student conferences emphasizing about the right usage of the new media will mature them to effective usage. Research efforts should be increased multi-fold and to the last rung of scholars by inspiring them to innovate and participate in the mainstream socio-economic activities of the nation. *Care is yet to be taken to ensure that children accessing the Net in cyber cafes are protected from objectionable content and dangerous characters like child pornography and online pedophiles. Many educators and parents are unaware of how to use software filters on the Net.*²⁰

Extreme globalization results in Loss of Nativity and that bring in drastic decrease in transfer of life-supportive knowledge from generation to generation. Information from the skies is becoming more of a hindrance than encouraging and preserving peaceful life. Comforts have increased while tranquility is losing. There is a huge compromise between material comforts as against the values that go with it. Thanks to new media.

New media has spelt a death knell on local identities. In India, local heroes are vanishing fast. Local herbs, local food, local arts, local literature and most that is local simmers in front of the giant practices of influences of global culture imitatively imbibed by sensitive but not sensible generations.

Indian culture is qualitatively scientifically based. Slip of such a magnanimous culture will erase the supportive platforms and end without a ground. Technology blurs the diversity of the cultures and results in mono-culture, devoid of any spice of life, making it very monotonous and as a result, a stressful society, disastrous for mankind.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Globalization – Free Economic & Market policies oriented concept and practice world over.

LPG – Liberalization, Privatization, Globalization – all catering to open market economy.

Technological pluralism – Various technologies adopted by different mass media leading to complex effects on users and societies.

New media technologies – Technologies broadly based on satellite communication and adopting different types of electronic gadgets for various levels of communication.

Culture – Cultivated habit over a period of time by the individuals, groups and masses in different societies.

Cultural studies – Studies used as learning platforms for better understanding and progressive living of different societies world over.

Communication Order – A scientific and cohesive system wherein accepted policies guide the communication process for achieving objectives of respective nations. Eg:- UNESCO initiative of New World Information & Communication Order.

AWNA – Arab World News Agency

NAPNA – Non-Aligned Pool of News Agency

MENA - Middle-East News Agency

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Digital divide – The gap arising out of inaccessibility of technology based information between different sections of societies.

Global village – A utopian idea by the social scientist Marshal McLuhan.

Convergence – Availability of different media of communications on single platform or technology.

e-communities – Users of various electronic technologies to communicate, access and share information and emotions.

FDI – Foreign Direct Investment– allows outside nations to invest in one’s own soil.

Media imperialism – Monopolistic practices by different media barons with aggressive agenda of controlled disbursement of infotainment.

Global News Agenda– News portrayal and perspectives as agreed upon by media imperialists.

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