THINK INDIA (Quarterly Journal)

ISSN: 0971-1260
Vol-22-Issue-3-July-September-2019

The Touch of the Print and the Convenience of the NET

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ABSTRACT:

We are constantly made to choose whether we would like to read a text in the printed version or would rather prefer an e-document. Many people of the older generation discard texts because they don't "feel" the process of reading without having an access to a hardcopy. Also, even when things are submitted online and can be accessed, people prefer to take a print out. An aesthetic value is attached with the printed form. However, the electric medium has its own advantages that cannot be negated. This paper would aim to look at different dimensions of the warfare between the print and the electric.

KEY WORDS:

New media; digital India; technology; printed texts; computational turn; digital humanities.

We are living in the digital era. The technological advancements have resulted in the evolution of a new lifestyle. New modes of reading, writing, and connecting have come up to the surface, drastically altering the old ways of living. No one can deny the importance of technology, how it has revolutionized the world per say. Nothing remains as it was before. The world has indeed acquired new hues. The change that has been created through coming up of more feasible technology is irreversible. We cannot look back or go back. The way technology is encroaching upon human lives cannot be overlooked.

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ISSN: 0971-1260
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The world has shrunk to become a "global village". Everything seems to become accessible, if not physically then virtually, under one roof, under your thumb. Humans have not just reached Moon, but are now planning to reach Mars. Such is the ambition of man. India, for instance, launched the Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) back in the year 2013. Since then, much more has developed to explore the unexplored universe. Not only have we made our endeavors in aerospace, similar is the story with other fields of science, be in medicine or communication. PM Narendra Modi envisages a digital India, whereby several initiatives are taken by the government agencies to provide the services online and also to educate and familiarize people with the new technological upgrade.

One of the most important reasons for bringing about the change that we witness today is the internet. It is internet that has revolutionized the world and the people. It has made possible to bring people closer and also made communication much easier. One can sit in the comfort zone of his room and yet be aware of what is happening in the world, or can order anything he needs be it some electronic gadget or food or clothes. The world has indeed shrunk.

Just like in every other façade of life, literature too has gone through a tremendous change over the years. When it comes to a text, it is made available in both the tradition medium and on the electric medium. One dilemma that the reader of the new era faces is whether to opt for reading a text in the printed form or to go for the more modern version of the text. Both the mediums have their own pits and peaks. The paper would delineate both the highs and the lows of reading through a particular media.

When it comes to a text conventionally printed in black and white, people attach aesthetic value to the product, making themselves more emotionally connected with the text. This is not just true for the older generation alone. People who are relatively young also share the idea of a hardcopy being a superior product as compared to the e-books. The reading experience, therefore, becomes more satisfactory since not only it serves the intellectual brain but also pleases the heart in some mysterious way. Holding and owning a hardcopy gives you a strange sense of possession. You can claim the text as yours, which doesn't have the same effect on the softcopy, so as to say. A reader attaches more value to the product when the emotional quotient is high. The feeling of holding a book, keeping a pencil to trace the pace, making small notes and

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ISSN: 0971-1260
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bookmarks, the smell of the book provide the emotional backup to the reader. Most of the aforementioned options like bookmarking are available via electronic sources as well, and yet the print weighs more than the electric.

Reading online or through pre-saved copies has its own set of advantages. For one, it is more convenient and accessible. All you need is an electronic device, be it your laptop or kindle or any other medium, and you are good to go. You can store so much reading material without having to worry about its weight. The options that one has, therefore, are manifold. It is cheaper as compared to the printed version and is environment friendly. More and more youngsters are opting for the electronic version. The use of hypertexts improves the scope of reading and facilitates the reader to move beyond to the text that is presented to him. But there are so many factors that affect the dynamics of reading.

One aspect that determines our relation with the surroundings we inhabit is our general awareness of the subject concerned. We tend to be suspicious of the things that we know a little about. Similar is the case with the new technologies that are flooding our way with a blistering speed. Even a major portion of youngsters are not well versed with the computational turn that took place after the advent of the computers and the internet. Having witnessed an age where everything was scrutinized with hands, making peace with the computers seem to take a lot of time. So many decades have gone by since the invention of electric media and yet it is still treated as an alien, a stranger intruding the personal space.

When it comes to using internet even for official purposes, we lack the technological knowledge that is needed for the purpose and hence are dependent on others. In order to lift the mental blockage and to boost the digital revolution, many organizations have come up for instance Girls X Tech foundation, which is a non- government organization that is helping the girl students in schools to be independent when it comes to the usage of internet and allied activities. It is very important to acquaint the children at a very young age with the ever so new technologies.

Apart from the lack of knowledge of the subject, one aspect that hinders the revolution is the trust we associate with the electric medium. When we fill forms or submit fees through the

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ISSN: 0971-1260
Vol-22-Issue-3-July-September-2019

online mode, there are institutions, especially educational organizations that require the candidates to submit a hardcopy as well to the concerned department. This doubles up the work and increases the suspicion associated with the e-medium. Similarly, the conventional mode of teaching requires students to not use their electronic gadgets in class. Even though a study material is accessible from the e-media, they are forced to take out the print outs. It won't be wrong to point out that we are moving forward to a new digitalized India and yet we keep looking back at the conventional mediums.

Most of the theorists in humanities still follow the conventional way and intent the reading material to be read in a linear manner, even if it has been uploaded for the electronic/digital reader. Even after so many years, the hypertext essays are very similar to that of the printed essay. The writing format remains intact. Even the proponents of hypertext choose to write in a monographic pattern, in order to reach a larger academic audience.

Jay David Bolter in his seminal work "Theory and Practices in New Media Studies" establishes how new media studies has become the centre of attraction, especially after the advent of digitalization and the rise in interest for such field on social, cultural and economic front. Different disciplines, in order to show how they too are involved in the digital revolution and how their course field is relevant and up to date, claim their association with new media.

The academic humanists, even though agreed to assimilate the new cultural practices and products into the realm of their discipline, there is still a wide gap between the theory and practice. These media theories do not in any way further the interest or development of the new media, on the other hand the primary focus lies in deconstructing such cultural and social practices.

The advent of the new media is seen with suspicion by the cultural critics. The main reason for such a behavior, as is pointed by Jay David Bolter, is that in the field of pure sciences and computer graphics, theory facilitates practice. On the other hand in humanities, theory critiques or rather deconstructs practice. There is a need to attain a fusion of theoretical stance of the cultural theories with the constructive attitude of the visual designers. Cultural theorists are often too skeptical about New Media; they look it as a tool in the hands of capitalists in order to

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ISSN: 0971-1260
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maximize their interests. Along with other products, culture too is manufactured in factories and is thereafter, introduced in the market for consumption, through different tools and agencies of culture industry like new media. In this respect, human consciousness too is shaped by the neo-capitalists. It must be noted that culture theorists need to take a balanced approach, just as poststructuralists like Derrida critiqued the structures and institutions of language through language itself. Rather than staying away from the new media, the cultural theorists should dwell into the realm of the new media in order to present a critique of it and thereby deconstructing it, which is the main concern of such theorists.

There are different reading groups on the new media platforms, where a person can engage into intellectual discussions with the people all around the globe. Such groups help in enhancing the knowledge and broadening of the mind. Reading activity can be transformed into a more interactive process whereby one can share his own understanding of a text and at the same time acknowledge different perspectives or takes on the same product. The fusion between the theory and practice is envisaged by Bolter, as the new media theorist dwell into the new media in order to look at the loopholes, there is a chance of the theorist to become the practitioner of the new media. The new media, therefore, becomes a platform where postmodern identity can be constructed. Some new media theorists (cyberenthusiastics) are of the view that the new media has a way more democratic environment as compared to the social and physical environment. The notions of the constructed identities like that of gender, race, and geographical distinctions cease to exist on such a platform

One must note how when too much focus is put on criticizing an event or object, sometimes the goodness too is undermined or ignored. New media, on a positive note, can be seen as a great democratic agent, where hierarchies between high and low are shattered. Art has now become accessible to the common, ordinary masses. There is a need to find a balance between the theory and practice. Rather than ruthlessly critiquing the technological advancements and products like new media, one must establish a middle ground where a critical stance should be maintained but the benefits of the technology and digitalization that lead to the empowerment of the ordinary man should not be neglected

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Walter Benjamin in his essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", also shows how the art and culture which was hitherto an elite domain, has become more accessible to the ordinary people. We are indeed moving from formal theory towards ideological theory and just like in computer sciences, theory must in some way should be linked with the practice. Whether a printed form is better than the electric form, is still debatable. It depends on the subjective opinion of the reader. However, it is advisable to have an open mind towards the new media. The future is indeed in a digital form and therefore one must acknowledge the presence of technology and should make full use of its nature and convenience. Let us make full use of the "digital humanities" that's been offered to us.

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