

The Impact of Digital Praxis on Culture Values: A Neo-Humanistic Approach

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Abstract

Human world has undergone many movements prominently through Renaissance, Reformation, Agrarian Revolution, Industrial Revolution, Urbanisation, Globalisation and now Digital Revolution. The whole world becomes a global village. Today, there is a common opinion that the digital technology is unavoidable threat to humanity. Jeff Bezos of Amazon says: “you are not going to die, you are going to turn digital”; this notion is a positive one that is unconditionally spread over human life, creating a cyber space full of digital praxis acquired as new culture values. Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar, a promising Indian philosopher, realising the ideological limitation of humanism articulated the term Neo-Humanism as an alternative for universal humanism assuring the future citizens with love and compassion. This article attempts to explain how the negative aspects of digital technology can be positively reviewed using the philosophical notion of Neo Humanism. This approach tries to connect the dots between materialism and spiritualism; between rationalism and self realisation; between self-centred ego and socially concerned consciousness.

Keywords: Digital Praxis, Culture Values and Neo-Humanism

Today, the human life is seriously conditioned by digital praxis, which means the customs and practices promoted among human beings subverting some culture values or recreating something new that would be of digital culture. Many web and mobile phone applications affect the creative artefact of human nature and this ‘digi-tech’ tends to tap men’s imitative culture, virtually making copy of the copy of the copy of the texts whether in the field of music or painting or images or graphic representation of what not. Tarleton Gillespie in the new media related essay, “The stories digital tools tell” views: “Technology is from the start and at every moment, fully embedded in a social matrix of institutions, activities, and values.” (108)

In the digital world man is in general pragmatically reduced to mere data. His/her identity is codified by their biological organs like fingers or iris or speech organs. The bio-data of every citizen is converted into binary code which in the computer’s C P U is programmed to encode/decode. All the data, textual (both verbal and statistical) aural, visual,

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 20:2 February 2020

**Prof. Dr. S. Chelliah, Editor: Select Papers of the International Conference on
*Human Praxis and Modern Configuration through Literature***

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caricatures or paintings, music and movies turn to be 'digitext', which is derived from "digitextuality, then, is not only concerned with digital media's remediation...of our practices of intertextual reading and writing given our need to negotiate between, radically different sign systems"(Anna Everett 7); also states that most contemporary media texts, including films, are produced with some degree of digital manipulation, processing and computer generated images-CGI(9). They influence the people especially young minds to experience some culture behaviour or pattern. Certain cultures related to sellers and consumers are re-organised digital super markets like Amazon or Flipkart, Snapdeal, Club Factory and so on. There are digitally programmed local, regional, and global shopping phenomena. The culture values have been altered in the "sociotechnical lands cape". Sellen and others reflect on human values in Digital age: "The field of human computer interaction (HCI) came into being more than 25 years ago...landscape have been so great...as well as aid us another aspects of these digital praxis affect the human beings with the emergence of "movie interactions". Mc Sweeney and Stuart Joy began their enquiry whether the human kind lives in a sane society; they gazed into *The Black Mirror*, a television show more with black mirror(1). In the same book Fran Pheasant –Kelly comment on the TV serial : "Black Mirror (2011) deals with a number of contemporary issues namely social media"(19).

It apparently expresses the moral decline, a kind of cultural void, as Yeats poetically gets disappointed in his poem, "The Second Coming":

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.
"The Second Coming," William Butler Yeats, 1919

E. M. Forster also starts from a sense of a collapse in moral communication, a disconnection of men from their traditional roots and values, and moves on, especially in the experience of the cave in *A Passage to India* (1924), to yet another image of the void underlying human existence.(4) 'The passionate intensity ' has become pervasive. Horkheimer elaborates the issues related to entanglement of technology and social relation:

Society in its present form is unable to make effective use of the powers it has developed and the wealth it has amassed. Scientific knowledge in this respect shares the fate of other productive forces and means of production: its application is sharply disproportionate to its high level of development and to the real needs of mankind. Such a situation hinders the further development, quantitative and qualitative, of science itself (Qtd. In Karin Stogner 86).

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Knafo and others consider this 20th century, “the age of perversion”. They paid a significant attempt to analyse the term’s diction in today’s context:

What a perfect term to convey an intimation of the perverse; the crooked path. Perversity wants to twist away from the norm, transgress against the law, move the path away from its intended or original quotes, turn away from truth, whether it is an accepted truth... or some inner truth, which cannot be faced (1).

Indeed, the whole world witnesses more crimes either directly induced by the digital praxis like pornography, hacking the data of economical as well as civil data manipulating or indirectly being conditioned by the virtual reality born out of this cyber space. Naturally this digital praxis unconditionally tap the human being to be pervasive, which “involves dissatisfaction, anger, restlessness, and impudent impulse...It rebels. It challenges. It disturbs. It is a friend of both creative inspiration and destructive violation” (2). Thus this pervasive attitude towards society is recreated through all sorts of multi- media schema and devices.

It is also same in the events concerned for social media. The function of social media in everyday space and time is redefined so as to represent and “shape our common pleasures” and also “a democracy of taste is brought into being”. In this context, “the term [everyday] is identified with popular and the ease with which it is able to pass between discipline and practices, suggests that everyday has now become above all else, a meta-signifier of social and cultural inclusivity” (John Roberts 1).

At the same time as a media critic the researcher can probe into the other positive side of digitally enhanced human values. On the one hand men and women are globally afflicted by the nihilist occurrences experienced in the techno specific human world, on the other the man kind is benefitted abundantly by the digital revolution and there on the world has become a global village indirectly promoting universal human relationship or humanity without walls. The human cultural values range from altruism to intellectual liberation. Many academic as well as socially committed blogs and websites would integrate this fragmented society caused by racial, religious, communal, gender, environmental and other anti-social discriminations. Hence, the cyber world may narrow down the world space but it helps one broaden the mind space. Digitally and virtually evolved technology plays a vital role in medical as well as space research; agriculture as well as disaster management; e-governance as well as education; e-shopping as well as consumer production. Discoveries, inventions, and research continue to expand into future using these digital praxis. Digital technology stands beyond the best and worst phenomena. For, human’s attitude or desire for perversity would mar or make the human values but not the technology, which represents the scientific bend of mind and the growth of human intelligence.

However, the positive human value based ‘digicult’ practices are not much paid attention, these humanist praxis present in the cyber space may well be realised by the Neo

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Humanist approach advocated by a promising Indian philosopher, Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar who phrased this concept as an alternative for universal humanism. The euro-centric humanism is reviewed by the critics that it is limited to have a concern only for human relationship never considering other species or nature sources. At this juncture where the chaotic disposition exists to reject or accept this digitally conditioned cyber space, which has made a considerable impact on human values. It is best to quote the words of Sarkar :

What is Neo-Humanism? When the underlying spirit of humanism is extended to everything, animate and inanimate, in this universe – I have designated this as Neo-Humanism. This Neo-Humanism will elevate humanism to universalism, the cult of love for all created beings of this universe. Explaining humanity and humanism in a new light will give new inspiration and provide a new interpretation for the very concept of human existence (17).

There is an uneasiness that has spread throughout intellectual and cultural life. It affects every discipline and every aspect of life (Richard Bernstein 4). It is evident that every global citizen in this technocratic digital world needs to be realised with the social consciousness which is morally or spiritually enhanced.

Inayathulla, a staunch follower of Sarkar reflects on his divine thought of alternative feature, and “ focuses on Sarkar’s alternative theory of science, truth and power and how he diverges from modern and post modern constructions. In it I agree that Sarkar develops a new science of society that is neither technocratic nor does it romanticize history (11)”.

Thus, the concept of Neo-Humanism assures not only the present but also the future citizens, who are completely influenced by this digital praxis discussed, with love and compassion. The great literatures of the world are greatly recognised only because they promote humanism common to this universe. Kaniyan Poongundranar of Cankam poetry thinks of universal brotherhood as “the entire world is my space and everyone my kith and kin”. Hence, the negative aspects of digital technology has been positively reviewed using the philosophical Neo Humanism that the researcher believes, is a better solution for peace making among the global citizens who have been, in general, self centred technocrats.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 **20:2 February 2020**
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