

Perspectives on Culture, Technology and Multiliteracy in India

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Introduction

Culture is seeing and sensing the tangible and intangible in the development paradigm. This has to be imagined, visualized, experienced, explained, narrated and criticized by us. In the words of Radcliffe (2006), Culture has gone from being a "background" factor in development paradigms and practice. Culture has gone from being a "background" factor in development thinking to becoming a new buzzword, seen to be central in the dynamics associated with development processes. (Weiss, C.H.1995)

There are many definitions of culture. Alfred Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn (1952) compiled a list of 164 definitions of culture. According to E.B. Taylor, culture or civilization, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.

Above all the verbal definitions, culture is a phenomenon that is to be experienced rather than understanding it through books or any other manuscripts. Culture has evolving traits and can change quickly. However, if we have the tendency to become multiliterates, we can get a glimpse of world culture through Web 2.0 and Web 3.0. Because of the ease in computing and connection through technology, the world seems to be converging with its cultural diversity into a global village. According to Appadurai (1996), "The central problem of today's cultural interactions is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization." Perhaps we might be living in a world with only one culture in the future.

Developing countries must develop more technological capability and greater flexibility to succeed in the more demanding and asymmetric global environment. The stark differences in culture in the historical past and the cultural transitions due to technology and internet in the 21st century resulted in the emergence of a nation with peoples of varied sensibilities that are both intangible and tangible. Evidently, a new culture has become common with multiliterates in a global village.

Methodology: Discussion of Culture, Cultural Literacy and a few Perspectives of Culture

Cultural literacy is a part of general literacy in today's world. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2004), "Literacy" is not just the ability to read, write and do mathematical calculations. Literacy is the ability to "identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, and compute". This involves the ability to use printed and digital materials in different situations. One has to be involved in lifelong learning to realize one's goals and increase one's knowledge and potential. They need to network with people all over the world. Many learners lack proficiency and cultural competency, or cultural literacy and the skills to integrate that with the digital tools such as face book, twitter and so on. There are indeed many countries which are still underdeveloped and yet to find a way to the process of technological improvement. In those countries, the terms like digital literacy and technology are still alien. In today's world, cultural developments go hand in hand with the technological, professional, economic and social developments. Therefore, literacy activities should focus on individuals who require the above-mentioned developments.

Developments in various civilizations have led many societies to flourish with patterns of behaviour and interaction. It is obviously judicious to cite an example to substantiate how cultural transformation affects the status and outlook of a society in due course of time. The social history of India could provide necessary inputs to this end.

Brief Glimpses of Culture in Medieval and British India

During the medieval period, there was a remarkable influence of the foreign culture on the Indian culture in terms of religion, language, customs and architecture. As Linton (1956) said, "Culture is an organized group of ideas, habits and conditioned responses shared by members of a society". Indians have adapted and appreciated to the changes in culture, accommodating it as their own. This intangible factor has to be experienced only through the synthesis that has taken place during the medieval period and its influence

stills exists in literature, music, dance, monuments and education in the 21st century, which is protected and promoted online by academics and through tourism and research projects.

The growth of foreign languages and literature in India like Urdu and Persian has to be noted. Subsequently, the literature of various Indian languages like Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi and Telugu flourished along with translations that became popular and fostered exchange of ideas.

The Engineering and Architectural Feats of Ancient India range from metallic bronzes to stone monuments. Indian arts had its early manifestations during the Indus valley civilization (3200-2000 BC). Many miniature sculptures made of metals, rocks and clay representing humans and animals remain as a testimony to the glorious past ranging from the medieval times to British period.

Dutt (1904) observed, "The sources of a nation's wealth are agriculture, commerce and manufactures, and sound financial administration. British rule has given India peace; but British administration has not promoted or widened these sources of national wealth in India". The British administration continued to exercise its power with better transportation to carry natural resources from various parts of India to the UK for its manufacturing industries. Therefore, they developed better transportation facilities by enslaving Indians. The following section looks at some of the aspects of transportation.

Transportation, Education and Typewriting Machines

The major developments were in transportation leading to better commutation of people. The development in communication was the telegraph, which was mainly associated with sending the raw materials to London. The major development was in the area of transportation. David Daiches (1993) in his work *The New Companion to Scottish Culture* has described how the introduction of railways in India and how it helped in exploring the remotest places in India paving the way for development. The nineteenth century railway network was very extensive, ensuring that while certain parts of Scotland remained inaccessible to all save walkers and climbers, less active travellers also had a chance to get to know different regions. (*The New Companion to Scottish Culture* 333)

The cultural changes have to be noted due to ease in the commutation. Earlier people used to travel by bullock carts and palanquins with lot of pomp and show. The number of travellers increased comparatively for various cultural programmes because of the developments in transportation. The people of that period resorted to travel by train, trams and motor cars as well. In the 21st century, we have the advantage of using trains without any problems associated with race, colour and creed. We have cultural trains in India such as "Palace on Wheels."

At every destination of the train, the tourists can experience the culture of that place in the form of folk dances and music performances and puppet shows. Therefore, travelling has increased the level of migration for the purpose of education, employment, cultural communication, for tourism and for health care. However, during the British rule, travelling by train and pursuing higher education became common amongst many Indians.

Education

According to Dharampal (1983), India had an extensive indigenous system of education before the British came. India was experiencing a low ebb period. With all the developments that India acquired during the British Raj, the unique diversity in culture existed in spite of the English education system. However, India experienced the lowest literacy rates. The Gurukul system of education was almost lost.

Lord Macaulay (1835) who was a historian, essayist parliamentarian and a member of supreme council of the East India Company from 1834-38, has recorded in the Minutes on Indian Education, the introduction of English schools in India. He said,

You do not know this Indian society is a peculiar one. Here the Brahmins are respected and the peon belongs to that caste ... it is impossible for us with our limited means to educate all in English. We must at present do our best to form a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect. He followed the "Downward filtration process".

To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.

He was instrumental in making India a bilingual country because of imposing the English as a language from class sixth onwards. English had to be learnt by Indians instead of Sanskrit or Persian. Many Indians benefited because of the English education.

There have been a number of intangible cultural changes and developments due to English education. Educating the mass in the secretarial skills is the prime focus. Typewriting skills was necessary.

Typewriting Machines

Indians learnt to adapt, learn new languages and skills and retain their culture. This is a cultural development to be noted. The beginnings of multiliteracy can be identified with respect to the development of employability skills during

the British rule. One such development was developing secretarial skills. The culture of having assistants with specific skills in typing, shorthand and English was most sought after by the employers. Typewriting and shorthand were skills that most youngsters were encouraged to learn. Because of these needs, Isaac Pitman in 1837, developed a shorthand for English language and Stenographic Sound Hand was started in 1886 by the Pachaiyappa Charities. They taught the language in a commercial school. Today we have the Stenographer's Guild of India, teaching all these skills including training in computers.

Machines to make Bats and Balls, Radio, Gramophone Record, TV and Films - Multimodal Literacy

Indians had their initial footage in cricket and polo. Other post-colonial countries like West Indies, South Africa, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan have also taken these games with interest. These new sports for Indians during the British rule in India have made many people support and learn these sports. Now many players have made India proud for having retained these sports after independence. Multiliteracy during those days was inclusive of secretarial skills, learning English and sports. The concept and scope of multiliteracy was different during the British rule in India. But during the industrial and digital revolution, the technological influences in the industries, education sector and the home front in the society have given different dimensions to the concept of multiliteracy.

The advent of gramophones, radio, and television and film technology has fostered cultural knowledge, language and literacy among the masses. All these developments supported cultural developments worldwide. The Indian masses adapted to these developments for their benefit even when the freedom struggle continued during the British rule. When the people saw the instruments like gramophones for the first time, they were excited to see as well as listen to the music came out of it.

The following sections show how radio, television and film technology developed culture and paved the way for a multiliterate world.

The history of radio broadcast in India could be traced back to the setting up of a private radio service in Chennai in 1924. Following it, the British government in India issued license to the Indian Broadcasting Company to put up a private radio service in both Mumbai and Kolkata. When the company became bankrupt, the possession of the transmitters was taken over by the British Government and continued its functioning as the Indian State Broadcasting Corporation. Later in 1936, the Indian State Broadcasting Corporation got the name of All India Radio (AIR). Since then the Department of Communications managed and functioned it. It was also a peculiarity espe-

cially considering the era in which it happened that in All India Radio, the women also were employed.

After Indian independence, All India Radio was converted as an autonomous organization. It was during the mid-1980s that television became an integral part of the private life of the Indian people. The introduction of colour televisions by Doordarshan (state owned broadcaster) during the Asian games that India hosted marked the real advent of a television era in India. The installation of transmitters for terrestrial broadcasting was processed in rapid succession nationwide. During this period, as a part of the project, the then Indian government made it mandatory that no private agencies should set up TV stations or transmit TV signals. Though the Doordarshan offered a virtual world within the Indian families, the programmes that it offered were rather dull and less entertaining except the serialized versions of a couple of mythological dramas such as Ramayana (1987-88) and Mahabharatha (1988-89). Apart from these, the programmes that Doordarshan focused were dull, less commercial and directed more towards socio- educational development.

If the introduction of colour TV in mid 1980s is regarded as a first wave in the process, there is indeed a second wave in it. The broadcast of foreign channels such as CNN and Star TV, followed by the introduction of a few domestic channels such as Zee TV and Sun TV, led to an immediate increase in the number of television viewers in India.

When the urban Indians learnt that it was possible to watch the Gulf War on television, they rushed out and bought cable dishes for their homes. Others turned into entrepreneurs and started offering the signal to their neighbours by flinging cable over treetops and verandahs. From the large metros, satellite TV delivered via cable moved into smaller towns, spurring the purchase of TV sets and even the up gradation from black & white to the colour TVs.

Tracing the history of motion pictures in India, the year 1896 is significant because six soundless short films were unveiled in Mumbai, the then Bombay. This happened exactly after one year when the Lumiere brothers set up their cinema company in Paris. Harish Chandra Sakharam Bhatvadekar alias Save Dada is considered as the first Indian to create a movie. He created two short films. He has used Edison's Projecting Kinetoscope to project the films where the exhibition was held in an artificial tent erected by the filmmaker himself. While considering the first feature film produced in India, the name Dhundiraj Govind Phalke also known as Dadasaheb Phalke cannot be forgotten. He produced the first feature film, "King Harishchandra" which was also a silent movie, in India in 1913. By 1920, many film-making companies had emerged in the private sector and in 1960, most of them had their own studios, artists and technicians.

At present, India is in the forefront among all the developing countries in terms of both the number of films produced in a year and in terms of advanced technology that is used in the process of film production. In India, there is a production and screening of more than 800 films in a year at present in various languages. Apart from Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam and Bengali are the leading languages in which the largest number of films are made. Though the fact is such, the films from India often turn stereotypical in its theme and structure whereas films with highly innovative themes and technologies are being produced with less expenditure in many other developing countries.

Results and Discussion: Transformation of Multiliteracy through Technology

With the advent of internet and computers, people began to experience changes frequently. They had to learn new ways of communicating using gadgets. Communication was just not restricted to communication by text or sounds but also through images, pictures and video clips. Sending e-greeting cards with voice and songs can be noted as a common cultural practice. This cultural development in the global village is prevalent in the multiliterate world only because of the facility of e-mail. All age groups of people are using it across the global village. There is frequently a thank you e-card or e-mail sent as a reply. Cultural transmission has been high in the past three or four decades because of e-mail and other web chatting tools. In the 21st century, "literacy" does not stop with basic ability to read and count but with multiple ways of using technology and the English language with different culture groups. We cannot still use the term literacy in the same sense. This new experience with the technology is intangible to a person who belongs to the 1950s unless they communicate on live chat with a person either in Russia, Japan, Brazil or in any other country. This experience has been termed as "Multiliteracy" by the New London Group. According to them, "the multiplicity of communication channels and increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in the world today call for a much broader view of literacy than portrayed by conventional language-based approaches" (Cazden, et.al, 1996).

Multiliterate world brings in a lot of heterogeneity and homogeneity with language and behaviour on the cyberspace. People who try to hang around in the virtual space quite often tend to share information. Sometimes one does not feel strange in the multiliterate world. People around you do make you feel comfortable. One major development to be noted is the ease of availability of information. But the ability to cope with information overload has to be noted.

With multiliteracies the world of learning has become dynamic. There is always a new way to teach and learn the same idea. The socio-cultural world is inextricably linked with technology. How a person communicates reflects his literacy level and experience. Multiliteracy refers to this cultural practice and knowledge. This aspect is like the flowing river and the changing process is never ending. Like how people of yester years acquired culture and developed along the banks of the Indus River in the Indus Valley Civilization, people who belong to the dynamic culture of the cyber world also experience higher thoughts, ideas and new learning, every time they encounter a new invention.

Theory of Change: A Hold Up to the Transforming Conditions in India

Change is inevitable and nothing left in this universe, which do not undergo the process of change. Anything that is tangible or intangible is subject to change. Theory of Change is essentially a comprehensive description and illustration of how a desired change happens in a particular context. It is focused in particular on mapping out or "filling in" what has been described as the "missing middle" between what a program or change initiative does (its activities or interventions) and how these lead to desired goals being achieved. A definition could be given to the change in the social outlook and material conditions of a society. According to Vago (1992), social change means that large numbers of persons are engaging in group activities and relationships that are different from those in which they or their parents engaged in earlier times. Lauer's (1977) definition of social change is even more pertinent as far the changing scenario in India is concerned. According to him, social change is an inclusive concept, which refers to the modifications in the social phenomena at various levels of human life, from individual to global. The developing trends in the field of science and technology are obviously the torch-bearer of the elements of change in any social scenario and the situation is not different in India. Ogburn's (1964) theory on technology and social change substantiates the role of technology in the drastic mutation of social conditions. According to him, technology is the fundamental driver of social change and it comes through mainly three pronged process, invention, discovery and diffusion. Invention according to him is a combination of existing elements and materials to form new ones. Discovery is nothing but a new way of looking at reality and diffusion is the spread of invention or discovery from one area to another. Of all the three Ogburn observed diffusion as the vital cause for the social changes which can create deeper impacts on the outlook of the people. As far as the situation of India is concerned, the doors to changes are always open. Plenty of job opportunities for the Indians in European and other continents and emergence of foreign

companies in Indian cities have paved ways for a cultural collaboration and this has its effects on the social life and outlook of the people. Hence, the Indians themselves do the role of diffusion (in Ogburn's theory, 1964) so as to bring the social change to the Indian society.

It is again a fact to be noticed that the modernization that burgeoned in India was an exact replica of what had happened in Britain during their period of industrialization. The textile industry in India is a true testimony to prove the previous statement. Tripathi (1996) explains that the Indians developed a textile industry, which was an exact preserve of Manchester and the most telling example of the British interference in the Indian textile industry. Another significant innovation that the British introduced is the introduction of mule spindle in the Indian cotton mills. The mule spindles were invented as a part of industrial revolution in England during late eighteenth century and it was introduced in Indian textile industries during the mid-nineteenth century. The ulterior motive behind this act was to accelerate the textile production in India and to export as much products to the Europe. One of the main reasons for Indian textile industries being made use for the advantage of the British is explained by Otsuka, et.al.(1999). According to their findings, most of the promoters of textile mills in India came from the mercantile family and they never had the experience of dealing with technology and administrating these industries. As a result, they bequeathed the technical affairs to the British officials who already had a previous stint with technology and industries in Britain. These officers had a natural bias for the British and hence made the maximum use the Indian industries in favor of British. Similarly the introduction of railways in India, though considered as a step to development, but was not bereft of an ulterior motive. Hurd (1983) explains that the poor condition of the land roads especially during the monsoon season has made the transportation of heavy goods to markets in the smaller regions inconvenient to the British. Hence, only when the British confronted heavy expenditure in logistics, they opted for the introduction of railway system in India, which makes easy access to any remote place with less expenditure. Similarly, many of the developments brought by the British in India were intended for the Benefit of the British themselves. A postcolonial reading of this phenomenon leads us to the fact that the colonial process in essence was never absolute. Anderson (2015) describes that "The empire has tilled across the world, showing that dominance is never absolute—that imperial or authoritative knowledge, despite colonial fantasy must always adapt to local conditions, mix with other traditions, and incorporate difference" (p.652)

Changes in the social order have obviously affected the life style and culture of the Indians and have tremendous influence to the changing culture in the world of technology.

The New Culture in the World of Technology

One major development in education that has to be considered as part of culture is the relationship between the teacher and the student. Changes in culture can be noted mainly because of the improvisations that people adopt for better standards of lifestyle. Culture changes because of the people. Majority of the youth who belong to the student community adapt to new technologies quickly. However, the need to know about new literacy and lifelong learning has become the norm of life. The increase for techno-literate individuals with ability to learn smartly increases. Every minute a new techno-innovation is introduced to the market for corporate, education, domestic or government purposes. The profile of a skilled person in the present century would be different from the skills demanded from a person twenty years ago. A person with multifaceted skills includes the knowledge of all media elements, the smart technologies and the ability to synthesize and create new ideas and technology. Spontaneity in networking and communicating efficiently would be the utmost criteria for any onlooker to be successful in future.

Cultural life is being shaped by technology and vice versa. There is a link between cultural developments and technology in a multiliterate world. The demand is to have the willingness to be involved in participatory culture and learn to gain knowledge. Apart from this, intercultural knowledge is also required to be multiliterate and survive in the virtual world. Being aware of the intercultural aspects in the real world or virtual world is essential for sharing information and peer-to-peer pedagogy. In a virtual world like Second Life, global communication takes place. People from different religious, social, ethnic, and educational backgrounds interact and most of them belong to geographically distant places in different countries. So to be really multiliterate with good intercultural communication in real life or virtual life means having good understanding of social attributes thought patterns, of different language speaking people, and their customs and beliefs. There is an intangible zone that has to be understood in the virtual world because there is more to be experienced and understood.

Culture and the cultural are autonomous entities, processes, and contexts. So intercultural literacy within Second Life (SL) is more than knowing a process of cultural exchanges within one context: it is understanding a convergence of cultures, identities, economies, politics, histories, and technologies; it is understanding the attraction and activation of cultures and cultural identities through discourse by having a telepresence within a virtual reality; and it is understanding that a context in SL is connected to numerous other contexts within the virtual and the real, each influencing the other. culture is reflected in

the interactions through technology which is seeping culture. In a virtual environment, anything that is 'virtual is cultural'. What we had as artefacts and monuments can be recreated in the virtual world. Moreover, the intangible that becomes tangible in the virtual environment is the experience of the convergence of cultures in the global village. We should also be aware that virtual worlds allow fictional elements to mix with real cultural elements in Second Life. Every time there is a new invention in the technology which is put to use for the public. These new inventions are borne out of anxiety: "We know that whatever we use today will be replaced by something better tomorrow." (Steve Jones, 1997page.3) What probably beholds as real today will be unreal in calculated days. Innovation and novelty will become the buzzword, showing transient nature in even concrete structures and knowledge banks. People would show off a strange culture with a different definition for impatience and anxiety. Their way of expressing impatience and anxiety in terms of time will be in fractions of seconds. The firmness of what is literacy would be rated high with the ability to sustain as a lifelong learner. According to the UNESCO (2010), "Mutual appreciation of diversity among cultures creates positive and constructive engagement. Dialogue promotes mutual understanding, knowledge, reconciliation, and peace, which are essential for social stability."

Technology has transformed our existing practices in our day-to-day routines. The different practices in the world have converged many diverse cultures in the cyberspace. The diversity exists only because of different geographic places and languages. The extinct languages are being revived by the data made available on the World Wide Web to a new world of internet users. In the past literature that was recorded on palm leaves have been lost because of climatic conditions and manmade destructions. The digital form of saving and storing literature helps in the revival of old traditions and customs. Diversity will coexist with the understanding of different cultures in the cyber world and physical world.

Automation and computerization have influenced every sphere of life. This is called cyberculture, which shows social conditions associated with quickness, efficiency and enjoyment. The cyberculture may be endemic to online communities and may span in the real world and virtual world. Cyberculture shows social conditions where marriages and divorces take place virtually, but have real effects in the physical world. Culture can transform the way people live within few seconds. While cyberculture has positive aspects in allowing handicapped people to know the world, the adverse effects can be due to hacking of information, money and wealth. Culturally one has to be aware of cyberculture to safeguard oneself from cyber thefts. Therefore, the developments can be positive and negative.

One major positive development of cyberculture for the students and the people who are interested in learning is being in touch with the experts and other students of similar interests. They can participate in discussions and forum post with their identity. The credibility of such interactions need not be doubted and are to be considered much the same way as in the physical world. Another cultural development is one's online identity in terms of our email ID, Skype username, blog, and web profile. Along with the physical identity in terms of residential address and official address, the online identity is mandatory for being connected with the world. These are the passes for entering into the multiliterate world. In the past, multiliteracy referred only to basic and performing arts, maths and science but with the advent of technology, multiliteracy has an extended meaning of being literate in conventions and technology along with the basic developments of literacy.

Online shoppers in a multiliterate world are known for moving around, surfing virtually with their virtual identities like people in the physical world, who are accustomed to window shopping and buy products. Online shoppers have the advantage of shopping from anywhere in the world in a few minutes. The culture of staying at one place and getting every requirement at one's desk is favourable for the online seller.

Thus, the changing phases of multiliteracy have made an impact on the culture of the people through the various developments in India and the world. Some of the glimpses summarised below reflects the evolving changes for developing learners' literacy and understand the need for multi-modal learning. Because of British imperialism, some of the important factors responsible for the growth of Indian nationalism have to be noted. Secondly, the developments in the means of transportation and the mode of communication have allowed cultural transfer of knowledge among the people from different parts India, bringing in unity in diversity. Thirdly, the influence of English language and literature on Indians through western education fostered the spirit of nationalism in press and literature. Indian writing in English flourished with great writers like Rabindranath Tagore. Fourthly, the British did not consider the need for better jobs for the Indians because the British government did not allow the Indians to hold higher ranks in the administrative sector. However, many Indians sought higher education and many learnt Pitman shorthand and typewriting, aspiring for secretarial posts in the government offices.

The fervour for building literacy amongst the masses was felt nationwide and the middleclass came forward and improved their intelligence. Cultural influences and developments in literacy in both the periods in India have influenced the other parts of the world, for instance especially because of the

geographical diversity and the success of the Indian Railway during British rule. However, no one can forget the hardships of many Indians, who worked to lay the tracks in diverse terrains. Indians and other colonial counterparts for the overall development have retained all these and many more developments. Following then post-independent period in most of the countries, sophisticated technology with WiFi and mobile technology has made India and the world a global village always on the lookout for multi-modal literacy.

Conclusion: Convergence of Culture in a Multiliterate World

Culture in the multiliterate world is intangible. New culture arises out of convergence of new ideas and inventions. Technology reflects new culture and change as a constant factor in a multiliterate world. Indian society witnessed a series of cultural and social changes. The recent social and cultural trends are nothing but a continuation of the technological changes. The views in this paper records glimpses of intangible constancy of changing culture due to tangible influences like the British rule, technological inventions, cyberculture and multiliteracy and many more. Multiliteracy and learning new technologies initiates the origin of the tangible media of intangible cultural factors.

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