# Digital Acculturation: A Study

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*ABSTRACT-- Digital media is an exceptional tool for expression, entertainment, enlightenment and empowerment. It is an influential platform which has an undeniable reach across the world penetrating different cultures, races, and ethnicities. On the other hand, culture is an integral part of human civilization that is under constant flux based on the different exposures it receives. Therefore, digital media's influence on culture is phenomenal due to its far reach and effectiveness that impacts the masses globally. This paper attempts to analyse the synergistic relation between digital media and culture on the basis of its merits and demerits. The study is carried out by scrutinising the influences of a foreign culture on native culture through the medium of digital platforms, digital media's influence on culture and vice versa.*

*Keywords-- Digital media, Culture, Influence, Synergistic, Merits, Demerits.*

## I.    INTRODUCTION

The current century also known as the era of Information Technology witnesses the expeditious development of technology, the seeds of which were already sown in the previous centuries. In the era of technological advancement, human civilisation experiences the permeation of a new element into their lives which became the part and parcel of most of human existence.

Every aspect of human existence is digitalised in this era of technological melioration thereby causing the emergence of a digital world. People's data, thoughts, opinion, passion and entertainment also found their place in digital platforms. Digital media rose to become a huge influential enterprise consuming more than half of an individual's time of a day. From the time of its advent, it has only seen proliferation and never faced decadence. Initially, it aimed to provide a platform for imparting information and later interaction and expression of a person's culture. Soon it became a compelling force whose influence on masses started to soar thus exerting its influence on the existing social culture and altering them in positive and negative grounds.

On the other hand, Culture is an integral part of human civilization which is not something we are born with but something by which we live by, yet every child born in this world belongs to a specific culture which shapes his or her personality.  It is a product of man's precocity intended to bind individuals within the sphere of community. Moreover, cultural identity is an important prospect of an individual's life, the wanting of which would

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lead to existential crisis and rootlessness. Thereby deep-rooted and inveterate cultural manifestations and preservation determine the trajectory of human civilization. The different developments impacting human society over the years effectuate the vicissitudes of culture, thereby making culture tangible which is always under constant flux. The influences of digital media have such a great impact on culture throughout the world and its effects includes both positive and negative. It sustains the native culture but also accelerates the erosion of traditional culture by supplanting it with a modernized digital culture or other foreign cultural influences.

The confluence of digital media with culture gives birth to digital culture. This paper aims to establish the synergistic relationship between digital media and culture on the basis of its merits and demerits. This study anatomizes digital culture into three dimensions such as scrutinising the influences of a foreign culture on native culture through the medium of digital platforms, digital media's influence on culture and cultural influence on digital media.

## II.    INFLUENCES OF A FOREIGN CULTURE ON NATIVE CULTURE THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS

Cultural exchanges, foreign cultures influence and its infiltration into native culture is a phenomenon which were always a part of human civilisations from the early years. In terms of language, manners, practices and habits elucidate such an infiltration. The primordial objective of which was trade and commerce, later people began to take interest in the cultural diversities of different communities. These processes have both merits and demerits. Especially in this present age of digitalisation, with the newfound interest in the novel idea of inclusion, people are drawn towards exotic culture and are curious enough to imitate and adopt it to their own life. Digital media provides a vast platform for the exchange of ideas among different cultures. The Oriental nations over the centuries were highly enticed by the westernised ideas and outlooks of Occidental countries, which the former tried to borrow and implement in their lives and society, and this influence was majorly aided by the colonization and invasion by Occidental nations. Thus it could be observed that the rate of exchange of ideas accelerated over the past century. Moreover, people of east had a deep-rooted misplaced idealism of the west and had an urge to follow their practices. The advent of digital media also amplified and facilitated this ill-placed idealismwhich can be seen in the negative influences on lifestyle and habits where our apparels, food, appearance and education is an ape like imitation of the west ignoring one's own age old culture, ethnicities etc. For instance, wearing sari and dhoti have reduced among the youth and an affinity for westernised clothes have increased through exposure to online platforms. Another example is the imitation of ideologies such as westernisation, where everything is viewed with a utilitarian outlook, the idea of carpe diem and capitalism started to creep into the eastern culture and popularised through the same medium. Thus it has both positive and negative influences in the arenas of technology, food, life style, relationships etc.

However, in recent times this wave shifted to the opposite direction that is, eastern culture and traditions started to pique the interest of the western masses especially due to the rise in advanced technology in China, Korea, and Japan. Thus the fascination of eastern culture began as a necessary requisite for trade and commerce which later developed as a legit interest of exotic culture. And Digital platforms facilitated in the panaromic exposure to eastern culture. The traditional healthy cuisines of Japan like Tofu, Sushi, Sashimi etc., new music trends set by Korean

pop popularised through digital media platforms like Spotify, YouTube etc., Fitness practices like Yogaand Marshal Arts started to be emulated and adopted by western community. In addition, some of the abstract concepts like Ying Yang, Karma, reincarnation piqued the interest of Western community.

## III.    DIGITAL MEDIA'S INFLUENCE ON CULTURE

In this digitalized world, media is the most impactful instrument as every aspect of an individual's life is linked to media. Therefore, the influence of digital media on the culture of communities has become an inevitable reality. Media's power of persuasion in making people believe in something and imposing upon them a temptation to act in a particular way is unparalleled. The digitalized version of media only widens this reach and doubles its persuasive and influential abilities. The rapid spread of internet and wireless connections accelerated and amplified the digital media's power, thereby making its claws to penetrate further into the human mind to control and possess it. Similar to every other invention digital media also have its twin qualities, and this dichotomy manifests in different ways. For instance it can pressurise masses to commit something fallacious as in "The Blue whale Challenge" stated to be an online suicide game associated with numerous deaths around the world. This illustrates the malicious manipulation of digital media which disorients the cultural values of an individual and forces one to undertake violent paths in life. On other hand digital media can also make a positive change in the society where it instills values through ideas like "The Trillion Tree Campaign" launched by the United Nations Environment Programme. It works through an app called Plant for the Planet web app, which motivates individuals to become a part of such a great global act by donating free plant saplings. Another idea is that of "Ice Bucket Challenge" which was used to promote awareness about amyotrophic lateral sclerosis and to raise donation. Such innovative ideas unlike the old conventional messages are more alluring and persuasive like the Ice Bucket Challenge that at a time challenges as well as inspires the youth to become a part of a noble cause.

Political culture has also been influenced by digital media both negatively and positively. It is used as a tool for facilitating political agendas by manipulating the masses with recurrent misleading information which deceives their mind by influencing them to believe in something that is not true. For instance, it can be used to breed hatred and false panic similar to Islamophobia by instilling delusive fear against a religion.

Similarly, digital platforms are also misused to further the selfish and cunning needs of political parties as in the case of Facebook Cambridge Analytica data scandal regarding the misuse of social media sites like Facebook to gain more support for Donald Trump in the Presidential elections. On the other hand, it enables the masses to participate in political and public decisions impacting their nations and to voice their opinions, which in countries with huge population implementing democracy otherwise seems to be an improbable idea.  Moreover digital media makes direct interaction accessible between common man and Ministers through social media sites like Facebook, Twitter etc.

Social media also aided in the construction of a 'global village' which enables an individual to communicate with others living halfway across the globe. It has cut down the geographical distances and blurred the boundaries between countries enabling a global connectivity unfathomed by our predecessors. This connectedness enlightened people with the life stories, cultures and practices of other communities and also helped them to empathize with others' suffering which would have remained undisclosed to them without the medium of social media. Another

aspect of the same is the strengthening of familial ties in the present fast paced life. The global connectivity enables family members to interact with one another who are miles apart within a matter of seconds, considering the increased rate in migration in the last decade. Technological facilities like Skype play a major role in bringing families together when they are physically apart. The traditional cultures of joint families are long lost and are conveniently replaced by nuclear families so the warmth of family is only felt through these technological aids.

In the modern era where people are moving away from their culture and tradition, digital media provides a medium for the representation of culture. The social media platforms enable the younger generation to get introduced and fraternized with their festivals, ethnic values and traditional practices, thereby keeping culture and values alive.

Social media composed the concept of Screen life which had a tremendous influence on people's life. People withdrew themselves from the reality of their true self and started to embrace a tainted and pretentious self, fabricated upon the demands of netizens. This retreat from true self yielded in the formation of dual character leading to identity crisis and other psychological problems. This also infected their cultural values as in order to fit into the norms created by others they started to break away from their own ways.

## IV.    CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON DIGITAL MEDIA

Apart from the culture that constantly transforms owing to the varied exposure, digital media also fluctuates based on the changing culture in society. It is said that art is the reflection of life and media is no less of a creative work so it reflects a person's life very well which is firmly rooted in his or her culture.

As people always have an innate instinct to express their culture, thoughts, values etc. they always look for alternatives to express their own identity which is embodied in one's own culture. With the emergence of digital media, literature and other art forms also found a place to widen its reach into the masses. This is the reason why web literature is a thriving genre that speaks the stories of men, women, society through various tales and poems. This satisfies man's age old desire to know about the lives of other people.

It is not only a platform of mere expression but people's craving to view or read things that are relatable to them culturally are satiated. So culture is a prominent element in digital media as different cultures makes up most of the materials for various digital media platforms. Several media pages or channels work only for particular target audience belonging to a particular community or an age group sharing a common culture. Many culture oriented pages, channels and sites are launched in the last few decades like Karikku (Malayali culture), College Humour, First We Feast (American), Sidemen (British) that only serve the people of that particular culture and produce content that are based on their cultural backgrounds. Apart from individual culture, amalgamation of various cultures is also manifested in pages like Jordindian (Jordan and Indian), Lilly Singh's Superwomen (Indian and American), and Jo Koy (Filipino and American). These pages serve the function of both entertainment and cultural representation.

## V. CONCLUSION

The synergistic relation between digital media and culture is elucidated through three dimensions they are: the influences of a foreign culture on native culture through the medium of digital platforms, digital media's influence on culture and cultural influence on digital media.

Digital media facilitates the exchange of cultures where foreign nations could use it as a tool for both enlighten as well as manipulate the natives. It also facilitates the flow of ideas, thoughts, and values where different communities share their tradition, customs, and practices. But sometimes this influence could also turn negative as in the case of Americanisation, where natives blindly imitate the values of the west because of their misplaced idealism. Thereby they fail to uphold their values. But a shift in ideology also happens when the west starts to get influenced by eastern philosophy and practices. Moreover, the familial relations that are on the verge of getting lost are also kept alive through social media by enabling connectivity among people.

Digital media influences culture by inculcating new values through innovative methods. It also has negative influences as elucidated through the example of suicidal online games. It aids in the development of a political culture that has both positive and negative effects, by giving voice to people and becoming a tool in the hand of selfish political propagandists respectively. It brings forth the idea of screen life, thereby disorienting one's identity but at the same time preserves culture by representing it.

Similarly, culture influences digital media by using it as a tool of expression or as a creative canvas where the thoughts, ideas, and cultures of people and their community find a place. This led to the emergence of Web fiction writers and online poets.

Thus, this synergistic relation between digital media and culture has its fair share of merits and demerits based on individual discretion. However, its merits are immensely useful which makes its presence undeniable and facilitates its progression.

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