

Digital Cultures: Study of Mobile Phone and Internet Usage among Youth

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Technology is altering the way we perceive the outside world. Mobile Communication technology has changed the nature of communication, sociality, and access of internet, social networking, and micro-management and so on. Entire world is engaged with mobile phone screens and everybody's story is different behind its specific usage. It has created communication more democratic and free from time and space.

This research will explore the relationship between mobile phones and youth, by finding how this technology is appropriated in their daily lives, how this has entered in their personal and social space, and their usages and effects. Mainly research has been done worldwide by non-Indian researchers. Mobile or wireless communication technology and their effects is next research area for media and communication scholars. Surprisingly technology and its effects are neglected by both communication and cultural studies. Presently tech-

nology like mobile is incorporated into culture; no culture is free from this intrusion. These kinds of digital communication technologies are reshaping the values and cultures. Researcher want to study the new culture of mobile communication, the various ways of mediated communication, digitalization, usage of mobile internet, online identities, individualization, new trends of social communication, relationship and friendship and much more. Mix methodology will be preferred for the study. The research has focused on changing nature of communication due to advent of new communication technology like Mobile Phone and its impact on village youth and sociality. There are both positive and negative sides. Remote village areas are definitely getting benefitted by mobile communication. Digital future is in the hands of Mobile Communication and wireless technologies. Mobile phone is a technology for the masses in real. It is used by masses.

Key words: Mobile Phones;

Communication; Culture,

Digitization, Youth.

India is known for a country of villages but the traditional settings of villages have been changing. Our society has witnessed the explosion of information communication technology. The expansion of new media technologies have been changing Indian villages' scenarios especially in the presence of mobile phones and due to its unique features, affordable price and easy to use nature. Personal Computers and Internet connections are still out of reach for many in Indian villages. Digital era may not entirely consider as digital in the real sense without mobile phones. Mobile phones, Internet and new media are inseparable characteristics of new media digital age. Mobile phones are playing very decisive and inimitable roles in everyday life of common people. Its popularity and active usage of mobile phones as a multimedia device is much intensive among youth. Every young hand is now busy on the 'touch screens' in rural and urban parts of India. Advent of mobile communication has transformed the older traditional ways of interactions.

Communication technology is reshaping social and interpersonal communication. This change is incorporating new values, new culture and new attitudes. Communication is embedded in social hierarchies; caste structure plays significant role in controlling social communication. Mobile com-

munication enables a personal communication channel to transmit and receive messages. Young boys and girls have access to Internet and social networking sites only because of Mobile phones because they do not have computers. But this kind of digital divide is filled by using Mobile Phones. Youth and their mobile phone use are challenging the traditional norms, values and restrictions on communication especially for young male female friendship and relationship. New media use is exclusively personal. Social hierarchies can not affect the usage.

The research paper has focused on changing nature of communication due to advent of new communication technology like Mobile Phone and its impact on village youth and sociality. There are both positive and negative sides in the scenario. Remote village areas are definitely getting benefitted by mobile communication. Digital future is in the hands of Mobile Communication and wireless technologies. Mobile phone is a technology for the masses in real. It is used by masses.

The paper will explore with technodeterministic approach to understand its effects on sociality and communication as whole. As a researcher I am interested to look in the digital future with Mobile Phone use in rural India.

Mobile phone as a multi-communication device has revolutionised our society and changed the way we communicate and interact. We live in the

era of rapid changes communication technology which is intensively dynamic in nature in terms of its technological advances are considered. Information Communication technology has been changing human engagement on personal social and cultural contexts from many years especially after the nineties, post liberalization period in Indian context. It was in full swing by the advent of Internet and Personal Computer, but now a day, Mobile phones are everywhere in the hands of rich and poor, urban and rural, men and women, teenagers, senior citizens. It is a communication technology boom in the present contemporary context. The wireless cheaper and easy to use technology has become intensively popular and widely accepted, used globe. More than one third of the world's population have access for Mobile phones, including developed, developing and under developed countries.

India is the most imminent market for this communication technology. According to BBC News India, India is the world's fastest growing market. In India there are 554.8 million mobile users and 143.2 million internet users.. Any new technology is accepted and experimented immediately by youth. (Goggin, 2013).

Context

The paper is based upon the mobile phone usage of village in Panshet village of Maharashtra in Pune District to study youth and their day to day usage of mobile phone. The character-

istics and magnitude of this communication technology, the association of mobile phone, How this digital device is important in their everyday life (Nayar, 2008), The situational uses of mobile phone, one's engagement with mobile phone, the perception of his/her and the perception about others who are mobile phone users.

Young people are becoming more dependent on their phones and could not imagine their everyday activities, and interpersonal communications without mobile phones. Previous research shows the relationship and friendship dynamics are so much related and become complex, young people are tending to communicate more on mediated platforms.(Ling, 2007) Their interpersonal communication, face to face communication happens in better and in multiple ways only when they use mobile for it. People are enjoying multiple-functioning-activities of their communication through mobiles phone.

Mobile phone is a complex and more critical medium to study (Goggin, 2013). It is so much problematic and difficult to analyse this digital media by theoretical perspective like techno-determinist approach. Marshall McLuhan (19964) and his famous statement Medium is the Message.

According to him the medium itself plays major role, without concerning about the content and the message source. It was the era when internet and mobile were not there in the scenario. Internet and Mobile that duo

are breath of the present digital era.

If we think as Mc Luhan says, then if you consider your mobile phone is a medium, then we can imagine how the `massage` is all about. There are very few things you do on other digital platforms but mostly on mobile phones. The name itself makes the sense, you have mobile hence the life is becoming mobile, without any stability and peace but giving always a pressure of being connected (Ling, 2007).

Psychologically human nature of paying attention, concentration, focusing on only one thing at a time is limited and it has been disturbed by Mobile Communication. Frequent interchange of multiple spaces creates problems of privacy and concentration and many more. This is really a problematic concern for young people; especially those are in academics of in higher education. Technology is for us for making our lives easier and comfortable but sometimes the side effect too comes with the use.

Youth as a Category

Gerard Goggin (2007) in his book entitled Cell phone culture says telecommunication and its social effects are neglected by social and cultural studies scholars. But now a day the scenario is indicating positive signs in the realm of communication and media academia. These kinds of studies are mainly examining youth as an important agent. Youth studies are getting wider scope since their engagement with new media technol-

ogy is been increased. Youth has figured heavily in mobile media and communication research since the inception of the field (Green & Haddon, 2009). Youth is a central category for researching new communication technology. (Goggin, 2007). The cell phone is a small, portable technology that allows us to participate in wide range of media interactions anywhere, anytime...it has become a must-have technology for many. (Hansion, 2007). Mobile is at the centre of social, personal, business and intimate communication. In this regards Pramod Nayar (2012) very appropriately describes the magnitude of mobile phone in our lives.

'Touch' is operative word even when we are speaking of distant communications. Communication is suddenly cool, and the mobile phone is the single most significant invention that has changed the way we touch others. (Nayar, 2012 p.29).

The contemporary world is digital because of mobile phone and by Internet usage, not just by a scientific and technological invention of technology but it is succeeded to reach in the hands of large number of people, not just succeeded in it but people and their day to day life, interpersonal communication, and life related activities have been becoming simple and instant due to the revolutionary device.

The cultural studies approach has looked at young users' negotiated use of new technologies in local contexts

(Yoon, 2006). Young people are not totally modern and are not completely traditional as per as their local attitudes and behaviour is considered. The engagement with new communication and their past history with traditional norm and parent`s teachings make them dilemmatic whether they are doing behaving is true of to follow what their parents and traditional values. Researcher found this phase of transition. It makes the identity phenomenon in duality. Global technology and its local usage in villages make it a global phenomenon to investigate academically.

Use of Mobile Internet

Keeping the village context in consideration and village youth as an agent of change maker there are some positive indication towards future, to become a digital nation. Mr. Narendra Modi, Prime minister of India has planned Digital India Programme and it is under implementation. Mobile phones are revolutionary in the present means of communication. Mobile phone enables a common villager to access for internet with basic mobile handsets too. There are cheaper mobile phones available in the market; those mobile handsets are affordable for low income users like villagers. Since the villagers don't afford personal mobile computers, laptops, tabs, but they are using only mobile phone to fulfil their digital needs and experience of internet access. Almost all the young people who interviewed for this study told that they are using

internet more than just calling and receiving phones.

Young people do their recharge online, book their tickets, online shopping, downloading songs, videos, films everything is easily accessible only because of mobile internet. Not just other entertainment oriented uses but internet is accessed for study related purpose, for checking emails and for acquiring more knowledge. Many mobile applications (known as Apps.) are popular among young people. Internet is must for activating mobile apps. Internet penetration in village is making village scenarios different than the traditional. The instant access for information making everyday life simple and develops a sense of being modern and with the present world. Mobile phone is a personal channel for transmitting personal content to the networked people. Media consumption like songs, video, films are accessed mainly on mobile phone and shared and stored. Previously the people could not afford a single landline phone but now they have mobile phones for each and every member in the family, at least two mobiles in a family. It is true that there are negative effects of watching porn in the early age. It is blurring the childhood and adulthood boundary.

Digital Personal Medium

Mobile phones found very personal in nature. Researcher found that, nobody want to share his/her mobile phone or mobile number to anybody. "Previously very few people had

landline phones, and the neighbours used to share the telephone number among their family and friends, but now everybody have their own mobile number" (Respondent, 25). Mobile phone is a media. It is used like any other mass media device, rather to access mass media content like songs, films, videos, and much more on internet. Young people are so much concern about their privacy. Mobile phone gives them a sense of private talk. Village culture is orthodox in its nature and a girl boy relationship even chatting in public places is not accepted. The freedom from these traditional restriction one can overcome by maintaining personal and private talk on mobile phone. Many boys' respondents said now they have even girls in their friendship list. They send SMS and text rather calling. Texting more personal, private and sometime intimate too. One young male respondent said he can enjoy the communication with girls which is not occurring openly in the village. Therefore mobile phones are not just important but more personal than any other person in their everyday life. Communication, affection, intimacy are basic human needs, it was restricted before. Mobile as a media gives the gratification by the use. It is main driver in inter personal communication for young people especially in relationships.

Online Sociality

Mobile Phones are associated with virtual identities. As Goffman`s theo-

ry (1972) of presentation of self describes electronic communication allows more interaction resources and the communication is different than face to face communication as its resources. Their perception towards themselves and sense of self is affecting due to constant virtual communication on mobile phone. Mobile and particularly mediated global communication there is no need of the recognition of real time and space. Young people have wide choice to spend time, what to access, where to access, and for micro coordination. (Stald, 2008). Mobile phone itself has feature to mobile and access information from anywhere and anytime. This makes the user less sensitive about his real-time space and time context. "I access internet sometime late night, when the data traffic is low and I can download whatever I want". Village youth are not late night wonderers; since there is less electricity outside, fear of animals like snakes they don't go outside after night and sleep early. Mobile doesn't allow them to sleep early. Internet access and interpersonal communication keeps on and on until you are willing to stop. Swedish scholar Alexandra Weilenmann states that even if we use the mobile to carry our social and personal life with us as we move, mobile technologies have not made people independent of place. According to her, "place" and "the local" are still important in the mobile world. (Stald, 2008).

Researcher has observed that respon-

dents were stressing more on the words like `anytime` and anywhere for communicating with others. It means they are rarely thinking about time as a sense for mobile communication. Internet is a medium which is global in nature; it has no physical and geographical boundaries. Hence young people don't follow any time or schedule for mobile communication. It is always desire oriented. One doesn't want to suppress his/her desire when they have full freedom to communicate with anybody and any time and from anywhere. There are many recharge vouchers available which gives free surfing and free downloading. These special vouchers are varies from ten rupees to few hundred rupees. Young people have the access to internet though they have few amounts in their hands.

Researcher found that this kind of relationships exists with the use of mobile phones by calling and texting without getting directly noticed. Communication as a process is getting liberal and democratic due to access of mobile phones though the social structure remain same the communication is increasing without considering caste and religious identity. More access of information communication technology will bridge the communication gap and social institutions will get challenged by virtual free communication.

Being Digital: Nature of privacy
Social networking is just one type of internet service but it is a normal

activity to enough for disturbing ones private space and privacy as whole. (Hansion, 2006). Garfinkle in his book entitled Database Nation: The death of privacy in the 21st century adds the roots are there in capitalism, free market, and open free competition, advancements in communication technologies. Hansion in her 24/7 says internet is virtually unlimited so we are in our always stuck to it. I think mobile phones have made us so ubiquitous for it the basic characteristics of mobile phone like portability, small screen, maintaining the viewing privacy, personal user device are responsible for such reasons. Their privacy is easily get encroached by other`s call or SMS or any related communication. Internet is making young people more isolated and they spend most of their time on-line (Hansion, 2007). It is a worldwide tension now a day, how to handle the behaviour of young people and their association with internet and mobile phones. Researcher has found many interesting things which told by young respondents including teenagers and young adults. Traditional plays, playing on grounds, social gatherings, meeting together is now seldom in the village. It leads social passivity and isolation. No more traditional social studies of youth and technology have increasingly addressed the issue of globalization. In those studies, the individualization of youth has been a key theme. Yoon, (2006).

Association with Digital Device

Mediatised communication has become easy by mobile phones. Respondents have negative feelings without mobile phone. Everyday life, daily routines are done through mobile. Interestingly the people around you are also communicating only on mobile phone.

Not just the technologies have changed its nature but there is a drastic change in terms of interpersonal communication is happening over the digital devices like mobile phones. Respondent were very nostalgic when they asked about their previous means of communications like post, telegrams, and landline phones, or messages sent by person to person. "It was more affectionate and with full of love people used to visit our houses for such messages now a day they just call but hardly come at our home." Says 25 year old a young adult from the village. The perfect empirical evidence is not there, which would explain the reason. But they are tending more towards their previous means of communications. Though digital communication technologies are full advanced and instant in nature but its content doesn't carry the love, affection and meanings which was there before.

It means not just the medium technological transformation is been changed but the language, emotions, attitudes and human values too. By knowing this all nobody wants to

switch over in those old technologies, by doing so means becoming out of date. Mobile phone usage gives them a sense of being modern and smart with the main stream of society. "I feel standard by using mobile phone" (A respondent stated age 18). The word standard has a meaning in their village. Since people are from villages are considered as non modern and backwards in cities. The feeling of modernness is associated with mobile phone. It is somewhere an attempt to make their identity salient in the society. Since there were always a monopoly over technologies by urban and upper caste people few decades before.

Conclusion: The study has been carried out to understand mobile phone use, social communication and changing cultures by young people of Panshet village and its effects on sociality. It is found that the advent of mobile communication technology has influenced day to day life of young people intensively. Mobile phones are commonly used in the village like urban areas. On one hand village settings are much different from urban infrastructure and facilities and other side it is changing due to easy access of mobile Internet. It has affected social institutions including caste structure and patriarchy and traditional values. New media engagement creates new values, new attitudes and new ways of interactions. Not just the communication technolo-

gies has been changing but the nature of interpersonal communication is also influenced a. It is supported by domestication theory, techno-determinism and appartgeist theory.

Personal, perpetual engagements for long time on mobile phones are resulting face to face communication reduction. These online activities are affecting our offline world.

Young people of digital age are more concern about their privacy. Socially their privacy is always being encroached under parent`s surveillance. Mobile phone has fortified their sense of privacy. They enjoy the benefits of uninterrupted privacy settings on mobile phone, though they are with their parents in real time settings. Third space creation is done due to mobile. Newly married girls can develop very healthy relationship with their dearest and nearest ones; it has reduced the fear factor of traditional patriarchal settings. They have a sense of control over their interpersonal communication which is not possible in their real-time space in the village. The increase in women`s association with Internet and mobile can improve new ideas and values. Learning by Internet, knowledge gathering, accessing information will definitely changed the village scenario of Indian villages. The major change agent would be Internet and mobile phone. It can be seen as a technology for empowerment and social development.

The appropriation of mobile

phone gives them a sense of being modern. Modernity is associated with Mobile Phone use experiences.

Mobile phones are used almost for any other reason. It is convenient and affordable for use. Their everyday coordination's and micro-coordination are getting changed. It is more impulsive in nature. They can call anybody from anywhere. Previous studies on mobile culture including the pioneers in the field, Goggin, 2008; Ling, 2007; Livingstone, 2009; Yoon, 2010, their findings supports mobile phones are changing young people's attitude and behaviour.

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