

# Science in media: Media and message in a techno-savvy world

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**Abstract**—Science and technology have become so much a part of our world that instead of underlining reality and fostering rationalism, they have lead paradoxically to overwhelming of our world with images. Something more pervasive and intrusive has been shaped out of this interaction- this is Virtual Reality [1]. Reality has been undermined by virtual reality. In the present times, cyberspace could claim to be more populated than real, tangible world. It has also engendered a global international culture feeding on media: where media objects become cult objects and have fan following. This culture further engenders numerous cultures that may be localized variants of the global culture, hence 'glocalization'[2]. The Medium is the Message' – this statement from Marshall McLuhan is no exaggeration[3]. 'Media, a product of technology, which in turn is application of science, has changed the way we perceive reality and our value – judgments. Medium is the message also means that the social media one uses would determine the social inclinations and status of one. For example, if you are on twitter, you are part of a clique that is famed to be witty and media-savvy. You are of the people who love the social networking site's capacity to make your message public and indeed invite almost instant reactions. New Media has also led to blurring of the line between high culture and low culture; it has led to emergence of new kind of art like electronic art, digital art, telematic art and of course animation.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The content of the media is anything from factual to fictional; from literary to scientific. Humans have always tried to transcend the limitations of media. Consider cubist paintings that try to convey multiple perspectives at the same time. Also, avant garde art and sculpture inspired by movement trying to convey fluidity in static media. In Da Vinci Code, there is a paragraph that informs about Leonardo da Vinci's habit of mirror writing [4]. Dan Brown's guess is that Da Vinci practiced this reversed writing to get rid of people peering over his shoulder, but the author lets the point remain moot. So media can reveal as well as conceal- reveal to those that know the code and conceal from those that do not share it. So medium is message in this way too, else it is nonsense. The unraveling of Genetic Code by humans- is it a divine indicator that nature is ready to share the code of life with humans and allow humans to interfere with evolution and determine it; or is it an alarming turning –point telling us that we have transgressed the limits delving into mysteries not meant for us.

knowledge eclectic and egalitarian. Therefore, media allows

## II MYRIAD MEDIA

When we think of telegrams, we think of urgencies and Emergencies even before the actual content is revealed; when of telegrams, we think of important messages that have relevance across oceans- may be serving some political nexus that is trans-continental. When walkie-talkies are the objects then it is some war-time message. We of course believe that anyone with a walkie-talkie will be shouting 'Tango-charlie'. Compare telephonic communication to the interaction that takes place on the internet. The message on telephone is certainly limited by the kind of channel. It relies on transmission of sound as opposed to visuals and sounds and written message combined made possible in contemporary media. It is not permanent unless recorded for future use. It is interpersonal and simultaneous copies are not generated for group, community or mass communication. Now, consider Twitter, the social networking site founded in March 2006 by Jack Dorsey wherein messages or Tweets have to be just 140 characters long. This demands Twitter community to use wit to express themselves in short, crisp language that also reads like news. According to Wikipedia, it has been described as the SMS of the internet[5]. 'Necessity is the mother of invention'- this proverb rings true because it is human need to communicate on personal as well as public levels. It is interesting to observe that a new phenomenon has emerged in which 'friend'-ship is redefined. In Indian context, friendship was associated with age. This attitude of veneration has been replaced by another one of informal access. Even, approaching another user whose 'profile' you like has become easier being facilitated by the portals tailor-made to enhance interaction. Such a portal is 'facebook'.

## III MEDIA, MESSAGE AND CYBERCULTURE

The World Wide Web, telecommunication, radio and television broadcasting and print technologies would not have been possible without the spirit of scientific innovation. These are media that have been developed using advances in technology. Impact of media on science and science on media is all pervasive- visible in societal changes. Enlightenment ideals of reason, thought and knowledge are not the heirloom of the elite or scholarly anymore; education has become democratized thanks to mass communication that makes knowledge accessible to all. Modern media has made for access to knowledge. On a microcosmic level it allows the

message to be replicated for numerous recipients. Consider what message did Narendra Modi want to convey by making simultaneous appearance at three different places at the same time on November 20, 2012 in Gujarat? That he is a progressive and techno-savvy chief minister? His appearance in holographic projections has been condemned as a ‘hi-tech 3D campaign extravaganza’[6]. But he also conveyed the message that he is a minister giving greater value to media publicity spending crores on it, while farmers in Vidarbha struggle with loans and failing crops. As an e-newspaper Firstpost reports ‘Modi’s speech was telecast on specially erected screens in Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Rajkot and Surat with the help of 3D holographic technology and satellite link-ups’. This was followed by Modi’s undeterred 27 appearances throughout Gujarat making him invincible almost.

Proliferation of media makes for cheaper media which in turn makes the message sharable and common. Furthermore, sophisticated media gives greater clarity and density to the message. Besides this, the multiplicity of media supporting each other or multimedia correspondingly allow for greater detail and panorama of information related to any subject. For example, I could look for a word like ‘gigantic’. Not only would I get to see the spelling, meaning and etymology of the word, but if I have audio software installed I could hear the pronunciation of the word. There may be still images as well as videos suggestive of the word which could be played if my computer’s operating system supports the software for video- player. This is usual today and fully loaded systems are regular since PCs have become common.

In *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964) Luhan asserts that media should be the focus of study in communication, rather than the message. By this, he emphasizes the importance of media as for him the media definitely alters the message. He also puns on the word message to ram home the point. He elaborates the point further with the help of deconstructing the structure of a movie. Where images are arranged in an order found best by the editor and not as they may have emerged in the chronological progression. Certain scenes are repeated and their very frequency makes them important. A montage of images may create a desired impression on the audience from creation of symbolic associations to the exact converse where every connection is undercut and in the end, the meaninglessness is highlighted as may be expected from surrealist or postmodern works. Similarly, if we analyze news content, we find that the presentations incorporate the message in a detached cerebral way that aims at evoking interest in the most weird of things and invite voyeurism as well as progressively desensitize the viewers as they are exposed to sensational news bytes often. To build upon and take from Luhan, we can infer the value of internet as a medium. The World Wide Web offers miraculous media that creates virtual spaces while paradoxically eliminating actual spaces and distances between the users. It allows skype, video chats, e-mails and groups that allow techno-savvy users to get connected. In fact, local cliques are created from a host of far-off users who share the

same ideology or outlook or interests. This brings in the concept of ‘Internet Memes’ [7]. Even their preference, of a particular portal or media makes them partake of a brotherhood-media brotherhood to be precise. Even, Skype when used to connect family members may be a comforting media but we have had instances where it was used for other purposes.

Technology is science made useful. Technology is tangible science- it can be touched, handled and used. Modern media are engendered in science; they emerge where technology is most spectacular and most handy at one and the same time. That also makes it most appealing. Media equipment, gadgets, gizmos and media softwares are all technological products. Technology, especially media, has become more affordable and accessible. Moreover, the farthest of regions presents a market opportunity to technological products and techno-media. So media is proliferating and the user is getting accustomed to this highly-technological media. The trouble is that in the endless flux of images propagated by contemporary media, it has become difficult to separate truth from reality and fact from fiction. Media makes science visible in its myriad colours and spectacular feats. Dry equations can move a genius like Einstein, for lesser mortals science has to be garbed as ‘infotainment’ [8] and ‘edutainment’ [9]. Science in society is science that caters to human convenience, but it is also science for a cause. The great inventions of science serve humanity and are guided by philanthropy and altruistic impulse. It is for humanity to make good use of them.

#### REFERENCES

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