

**Sayan Dey**

**New Media and Cultural Hybridisation. A  
Study on the Influence of New Media  
Technologies on the Youth of Silchar, India**

**Doctoral Thesis / Dissertation**

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**NEW MEDIA AND CULTURAL HYBRIDISATION:  
A STUDY OF THE INFLUENCE OF NEW MEDIA  
TECHNOLOGIES ON THE YOUTH OF SILCHAR**

**Sayan Dey**

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## **Abstract**

In this age of New Media it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between virtual and real these days. With the burgeoning of technology enabled communication, interactional transactions have become heavily dependent and concentric upon webbed web. Be it social, political or cultural- every aspect of contemporary human sustenance has gone for a toss and a state of interweavements has been attained. In the present day a gamut of digital communication, online tools, applications and technologies have become part and parcel of everyday affairs and even more so in the realms of communication. It is quite obvious that new communication networks empowered with digital technologies and internet are foremost tools which have enabled the enterprise of completely new representation of information production and dissemination, cultural production, management and control. The topic of this research work propose to understand the impact of New Media Technologies on the undergraduate students of a urban area of North East India, to probe if these technologies are having any cultural implications in terms of juxtaposition of multiple cultures. The thesis argues that New Media Applications have brought in a sense of hybrid culture among the youth by affecting the perception and consumption of cultural indicators among college goers.

**Key Words: New Media, Hybrid Culture, Youth**



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# **CHAPTER I**

# **INTRODUCTION**

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## Chapter I: Introduction

New media enable new cultures to transform society. Now that the process has accelerated to the point where it is visible on a daily basis, most people understand that new communication media mean new ways of life. Indeed, it is now possible to see how new ways of creating and distributing symbols have made it possible throughout history for people to change existing cultural practices, and through these changes in the way people socialize, to transform societies. –*Howard Rheingold* (Krekovic, 2003)

Lindgren (2013) in his edited book ‘Hybrid Media Culture: Sensing Place in a World of Flows’ states that it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between virtual and real these days. With the burgeoning of technology enabled communication, interactional transactions have become heavily dependent and concentric upon webbed web. Be it social, political or cultural- every aspect of contemporary human sustenance has gone for a toss and a state of interweavements has been attained. In the present day gamut of digital communication, online tools, applications and technologies have become part and parcel of everyday affairs and even more so in the realms of communication.

It is quite obvious that new communication networks empowered with digital technologies and internet are foremost tools which have enabled the enterprise of completely new representation of information production and dissemination, cultural production, management and control.

The topic of this research work proposes to understand the impact of New Media Technologies on the undergraduate students of a urban area of North East India, to probe if these technologies are having any cultural implications in terms of juxtaposition of multiple cultures.

India being a country, rich in ideals and ideologies, values and culture, with the explosion of internet driven New Media in the century, the Indian society has witnessed a deep cultural penetration or 'invasion' of culture of other societies. The impact of this virtual medium has become so deep rooted in peoples’ lives that in attendance, it is very much possible that it might have a profound effect on traditional culture and there is ample scope left for more. How peoples’ insight of looking at their lives have changed after the emergence of this new medium in the country is quite interesting to be eligible for research. In this river valley also there is a considerable population which is exposed to an

unprecedented infiltration of New Media technology or applications, and the people prefer accessing them regularly. The study is conducted with a view to see if the invasion of New Media has imbibed users to the things that are propagated through its contents in their own lives or youth just use New Media as a leisure activity.

Culture has a deep and wide role to play in one's life. The custom and cultural models of India revived back in India due to their portrayal in the traditional and old genres of media. Even the invasion of internet driven New Media in our day-to-day lives has resulted into to an imbalance between reality and traditional customs. Dramatised cultural implications as propagated by New Media might have a silent or public influence on peoples' culture, that too in a dramatic way. The study would help to analyse if residents of Silchar city, who are the loyal users of the technologies encompassed by New Media and its applications, are influenced by the cultural diffusion or 'invasion' as propagated by New Media.

Culture is, according to some popular schools of thought, 'arts' and something relating to the domain of fashion while some other schools of thought define culture as life itself. James Carey (2003), a renowned communication scholar, tried to capture the expansive dimensions of culture in his book "A Cultural Approach to Communication".

Carey deliberated as:

"We create, express, and convey our knowledge of and attitudes toward reality through the construction of a variety of symbol systems: art, science, journalism, religion, common sense, mythology. How do we do this? What are the differences between these forms? What are the historical and comparative variations in them? How do changes in communication technology influence what we can concretely create and apprehend? How do groups in society struggle over the definition of what is real?" (Carey, J. 2002)

Another prominent scholar in the realms of culture who also happened to be an Anthropologist, Clifford Geertz's definition of culture is: "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and their attitudes toward life" (Asad,1983).

To explain this idea- knowledge which is transmitted across the timeline is nothing but culture. Culture is nothing but various approaches towards leading life which are articulated through a varied array of symbols.

If we try to get these explanations in a more simple way we can say that culture is articulated and shared values, beliefs, attitudes and practices of a social group, organization, or institution. It is OK if that still seems broad and fluid. Since ages, scholars from interdisciplinary fields have had tough time to define the term because the description of culture ought to be all-encompassing. The definition of culture is not very easy. It is an expression, many would agree, whose definition is ambiguous and hence a confusing term to explain.

Velkley (2002) explained the concept of "culture" akin to the development of the soul or mind. Culture acquired its modern, contemporary and recent meaning through writings of German scholars in the Eighteenth Century.

Although not explicitly expressed, the most of such writings indicated a see-saw relationship between "culture" and "civilization". Two major connotation of culture that emerged from this period in time were: culture as the deep rooted folk entity possessing a distinctive self, and culture as development of defiance or liberated individualism. The first import here leads in contemporary usage of the term "culture," even though the second meaning offers a significant context in assessing what people expect culture to achieve, for example liberated "expression" of the distinctive or "true" self.

There are varied schools of thought defining culture of community or race and the list of definitions never gets all inclusive. But generally, we refer culture as ' the way people of an area lead their life'. More specifically, the entities which define culture and its manifesto are the cultural indicators like languages, religions, dance, music, architecture, food, customs and every other thing has a different appearance location wise within boundaries of a nation. But the dawn of New Media led applications and their subsequent boom, off late has influenced most of it appreciably. Be it food, be it apparels or other associated characteristics of culture, New Media have altered age old beliefs, customs, traditions and behaviour.

In History, people have perceived of different timelines and eras where different transitions took place. Similarly, various cultural eras also existed in their full manifesto



propagating unique and distinct phenomenon which have altered and influenced the chores of human civilisation. There have been a good number of varied approaches which are in exercise and they split the time into eras of cultural division. Let's assume that when a particular type of approach towards world appears via the means of technology and culture, the basic understanding of the concept 'world' changes. It is pertinent to mention that in every cultural era there was no change in the character of what is truth. The only change that has occurred through various cultural timelines was altered approaches of denizens to make use of the technology which is available to make a better understanding of the world.

And what and which way this sense was chalked? It is very apparent for anyone to perceive that for a better understanding of Mass Media and Culture and the dynamics between the two, a clear and lucid idea about modernity and postmodern age is quintessential. These are the timelines where culture and technology interplayed beyond our imagination.

### **Exploring Hybridity**

The concept of hybridity is in debate since Homi Bhabha (1994) authored his influential work *The Location of Culture*. in this era of globalization transformation in cultures is often equated as the hybridization. It has been essentially a post colonial term with rare occasions of broad discussion.

The notion of hybridity has deep roots with its counterpart: the purity. Hybridity can only be traced when purity is acknowledged. Transcending boundaries can only be aspired when existing boundaries are accepted, conforming to the subsistence of which is to be transcended. Every discipline which debates on hybridity has to define what it perceives to be pure at the first place. If there is nothing pure, the notion of hybridity becomes redundant. Ideologically, individuals and groups may perceive something as pure however epistemologically the idea of purity is never a useful term. Epistemologically purity has deep connections with racism and racial intolerance (Collins, 1998). For long, power structures have used the notion of purity as a tool for suppression.

Now, we should acknowledge hybridity from three dimensions: First, how individuals and groups create and maintain uneven power relations with respect to purity and hybridity? Second, how hybridity deconstruct the perception of cultural purity? Third, how hybridity can act as a method for studying transcultural experience?