

New Communication Technologies and Levels of Modernity among the Middle Class Youth in India

Debanjana Nag

Abstract

The era of 21st century, a number of changes have been observed in every walk of social life including the field of art, economy, culture, technology and so on. The technological advancements in communication technologies haven't only brought the mass-media at centre-stage but also affected the material and non-material cultural life of both the rural and the urban dwellers. The traditional cultural norms and values of the society have given space to new cultural patterns among the youth who have high mass media exposure. In last two decades of the present century, the emergence of "new media" (Facebook, Whatsapp, You tube etc.) have bearings on the values and cultural patterns by facilitating the free flow of the cultural artifacts through web based global connectivity. It has an impact both on the material and the non-material culture. The present paper analyses the impact of globalization and communication on life style and cultural patterns of the middle class youth in an urban setting of a northern Indian, namely, Allahabad city in Eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Key words: globalization, cultural change, new communication technologies, new media.

There has been a very strong relationship among the concepts of modernity, communication technology and socio- cultural inequality since the emergence of a state. Modernity refers to the rational, scientific and logical reasoning towards a human being, culture and all societal issues. As a human being through its thought process leads towards modernity, the level of inequality present in that society also demolishes gradually and as a result new forms of structural and cultural institutions flourish. In this regard, the mass communication process has worked as an essential driving force to establish modernity and development in the non-European traditional societies. According to Pye (1963:24), "Mass Media communication is considered as an important vehicle of modernity as it is an integral part of modern communication system." By media exposure of a society one can understand the likes and dislikes, living style, attitude towards one another, cultural settings etc. that are customary in a social system. It helps people to think towards each other more rationally through the process of interaction and thus diminishes the caste, class and other socio- demographic barriers among people. The present paper is designed to study the level of mass media exposure of Indian society and how it helps in establishing modernity and social inclusion by overthrowing the traditional practices of socio- cultural thoughts and inequalities that

were prevalent in the pre-globalization era. India has always portrayed itself as a country that is rich in its diverse traditional culture. It is a country with a vast population of 1.3 billion and each of them has their own material and non-material culture. The 21st century Indian society is mainly divided into rural and urban section of population in which the urban section relatively has higher level of modernity in comparison to rural areas. Therefore, to conduct this research an empirical study has been done among the middle-class youths in the urban settings of Eastern Uttar Pradesh. For this, a small purposive sample of 60 youths has been taken among which 38 males and 22 females are selected. The criteria of defining youths are done as per the definition given by National Youth Policy of India (2003) which covers all the youth in the country in the age group of 13 to 35 years.

Locale of the Study

The state of Uttar Pradesh lies in the Northern Gangetic Plains of India between 23°52'N and 31°28'N latitudes and 77°3' and 84°39'E longitudes and is the state with highest population in the country. The state is divided into two regions Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Western Uttar Pradesh due to its vast land area. The area of the present study is Eastern Uttar Pradesh, also known as '*Poorvanchal*' at the local level, covers 27 out of 75 districts of the state. The area has fertile alluvial soil throughout and witness the confluence of largest rivers of the country like Ganga, Yamuna, Gandak and many other rivers. At times the region experiences water logging problem and periodical floods in the rainy season. The major languages of the region are Avadhi and Bhojpur in assimilation known as Purbaiyah language. The major religion of the area is Hinduism covering 94.73% of the total population. The level of educational system is moderate and almost 70% of the population still engages in agriculture and other primary activities though the urban areas have seen some growth in secondary and tertiary sectors in present scenario. According to Census Survey of India (2011), Varanasi and Prayagraj are two major comparatively developed districts among others. The region is mainly divided into four major caste i.e. Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra in which the previous two belongs to upper caste or General category, The vaishyas come under Other Backward Category (OBC), and accordingly the Shudras belong to lower caste or in Scheduled caste (SC) in the hierarchy of the social system. Some of the major Universities are present in this region and is highly connected with developed infrastructural services like transportation system, communication system etc. making it an educational hub for the youths. The previous mentioned reason certainly makes it suitable for taking the region as a study area for the present paper.

Population of the Study

As stated before the 63.3% of the study population consists of male whereas the female constitutes 36.7% in the study. All the population of the study belongs to mainly two different religions i.e. Hinduism (91.7%) and Islam (8.3%). Other religious communities belong to minorities. The study covers all the caste that exists in the society according to their availability in the region, among which 56.7% belongs to general castes category, 31.7% belongs to Other Backward Categories, 8.3% are Scheduled Caste and remaining 3.3% belongs to Scheduled Tribe.

As far as level of education of the participants is concerned the most of them are highly educated with 38.3% post-graduates, 31.7% graduates and 11.7% research students. The representation of the secondary and primary level educated youth is relatively low with 10% and 1.7% respectively. A few (6.7%) of them have professional/technical education.

On the basis of level of income a little more than half (28.4%) of them have low level of income (upto Rs. 20,000 per month) and almost same number of youth medium level of income (Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 40,000 per month), and remaining 43% of the respondents have relatively high income i.e. rs.40,000 per month.

Levels of Mass Media Exposure

The mass media can be primarily divided into Traditional media, modern mass media and new media. The traditional media refers to the old system of media communication like drum, post cards or print media. The modern mass media includes radio, television, cinema etc. while the new media is based on the new information and satellite technology . It includes mobile phone and internet. The exposure of media in the present istudy area can be mainly divided into four parts: the print media, the broadcasting media i.e. radio, the audio-visual media (Cinema and Television) and the new media. As the study shows the preference of media technology can be seen as follows among the youths:

Table 1: Patterns of Usage of Communication Technologies

S. No.	Media Type	Frequency	Percent
1.	New Media	55	91.7
2.	Print Media	4	6.7
3.	Audio-visualTelevision	1	1.7
4.	Broadcast Media	0	0.0
	Total	60	100.0

The above table reveals that most (91.7 %) of the youth today depend on mobile technology and internet. The use of Print media and television is diminished drastically with 6.7% and 1.7% respectively. in among the participants selected. There is no user of radio. It suggests that most of the youth today have shifted to new media and their communication needs are fulfilled by their mobile phone. Other forms of media have now lost their importance among the youth.

The Contents Preferred in General

The contents of media preferred by a person represent to his worldview. The data regarding contents mainly preferred by the viewers is shown in table 2:

Table 2: The Contents Preferred in General

S. No.	Content type	Frequency	Percent
1.	music	15	25.0
2.	serials and films	15	25.0
3.	news	14	23.3
4.	educational	13	21.6
5.	adult contents	1	1.7
6.	health and spiritual	1	1.7
7.	Historical Facts	1	1.7
	Total	60	100.0

The data reveals that the respondents prefer music, serials and films (25% in each case), news (23.3%) and educational contents in general on mass media. Other contents such as health, historical facts and adult contents have a low preference.

The New Media

It is the most popular form of media that contains social networking sites, different web channels and blogs and other methods of internet technology. The time spent by the respondent on new media is shown in table 3.

Table 3: Time Spent on New Media

S. No.	Time spent on new media	Frequency	Percent
1.	Less Than 2 hours	6	10.0
2.	2 hours to 4 hours	17	28.3
3.	4 hours to 6 hours	32	53.3
4.	more than 6 hours	5	8.3
	Total 60	100.0	100.0

The table shows that 53.3% of participants spend 4 to 6 hours on social media daily while a little more than one-fourth (28.3%) spend 2-4 hours on new media. However, a few (6%) of them spend less time (less than 2 hours) on new media. Thus, it can be said that the new communication technologies are the most preferred technology among the youth. According to this study, 38.3% of the participants agreed that they feel socially paralyze if they are not connected with internet. The most preferred content they browse on new media are shown in table 4.

Table 4: Most Preferred Online Contents

S. No.	Content type	Frequency	Percent
1.	Web Series	16	26.7
2.	News	14	23.3
3.	Educational	14	23.3
4.	Cinema and drama	10	16.7
5.	Adult contents	3	5.0
6.	Fashion	2	3.3
7.	Health and spiritual	1	1.7
	Total	60	100.0

The data indicate that the most preferred content is watching Web Series i.e. 26.7% of the respondents followed by news and educational consisting 23.3% each. The lowest percentage includes Health and spiritual that includes just 1.7% of the participants. One of the notable facts in this table is cinema that was one of the most attractive medium for entertainment has been replaced by Web series which is most popular among the youth. The preference of watching adult contents i.e. 5% also an indicator of changing dimensions of the culture especially in a traditional society like India where youths are now more open to see these contents that were restricted since ages leading towards a path of modernity.

Levels of Modernity

The levels of modernity can be judged by the attitude of people towards a particular thought. As stated earlier Modernity is a variable that diminishes conservatism in a society and hence, also discards the socio- cultural inequalities and disparities in the society. To examine this fact some of

the variables were taken into consideration to determine the levels of modernism that is continuing in the society:

1. Attitude towards Online Education:

The first question is related to online education particularly its role in spreading education to every person irrespective of their demographic, social and cultural background. The data reveal that three-fourth (75.0%) of the respondents believe that online system of education is a good platform to gain knowledge as it can reach to all the classes of the society very easily through the new media of communication. While a little more than one-seventh (13.3%) of the respondents are unsure about it and a little more than one-fifth (11.7%) of the respondents consider it not as a good method of communication as all the classes of the society are not digitally connected. It suggests that the majority of the youth have a positive attitude towards online education system.

2. View on *Pardah* System in the Family:

The respondents were asked to mention whether there is still *pardah* system in their family. In answering this question a little less than one-fifth (18.3%) of the respondents answered in affirmation, and most (81.7%) of them answered in negative that the *Pardah* system is not anymore practiced in the houses. There was an inequality on caste line among the practioners *pardah* system as majority (64%) of them belongs to backward castes in comparison to 36% of the general category. Thus, majority of the respondents do not have practice of *Pardah* system in their family.

3. Attitude towards Online shopping:

The respondents were asked to mention about whether they purchase through online shopping and the items purchased by them through online shopping. Their responses are shown in table 5.

Table 5: Things Bought From Online Shopping Sites Mostly

S. No.	Items Purchased	Frequency	Percent
1.	Clothes and fashion	22	36.7
2.	Electronics	16	26.7
3.	Home needs and decors	13	21.7
4.	Food	6	10.0
5.	Books	2	3.3
6.	Groceries etc.	1	1.7
7.	Don't Buy	0	0
	Total	60	100.0

The data show that the all the youth used to purchase online However, their preference of items for online shopping varies as more than one-third (36.7%) of them are the consumer of clothes and fashion accessories followed by electronics (26.7%) and home decoration itms (21.7%) and food (10%). While only a few of them purchase items like books (3.3%) and groceries etc. , the lowest percentage belong to groceries etc. (1.7%) online. Thus, cent percent youth are users of online marketing that eventually define them as social group that is digitally sound and has accepted the modern style of living.

4. Opinions regarding Marriage

The repondents were asked to respond regarding thie choice about marriage. On the basis of their responses it was found that the majority (43.3%) of them prefer love marriage and a little more than one-fifth (21.7%) of them are in support of inter caste marriages. While a little less than

one-third (31.7%) express their choice of marriage within the caste. Those who prefer inter religious marriage have lowest percentage with only 3.3%. This suggests that today's young generation is in favour of love marriage but still they are bounded with the ties of caste and religion to a great extent.

5. Marriage through Online Matrimonials

The respondents were asked to mention their opinion regarding the searching of life partner through online matrimonials. It was found that most (56.7%) of the respondents in this category are unsure about the fact whether it is good or bad, while a little less than one-fourth (23.3%) of them were not in favour of such marriages only one-fifth (20.0%) of them consider it a good method for searching life partner. It clearly indicates that the people still give preference to traditional approach for searching a suitable match for marriage.

6. Chat and communication between boy and girl over Mobile Phones

On this issue, most (93.3%) of the respondents believe that it is not a big deal if the boys and girls communicate over mobile phones whereas 6.7% of them believe that it is not acceptable in our society and should not be done. It shows that most of the respondents are liberal on this issue.

7. Qualities for holding High Ranks

The respondents were asked to mention the qualities of a person for holding a high rank. Their responses are shown in table 6.

Table 6: Qualities for holding High Ranks

S. No.	Qualities	Frequency	Percent
1.	His family background should be higher.	3	5.0
2.	He should be traditionalistic or well disciplined.	14	23.3
3.	He should be famous among people	2	3.3
4.	He should be highly qualified or should possess some extra knowledge	41	68.3
	Total	60	100.0

The data show that majority of respondents (68.3%) hold that one should have necessary qualification to achieve high rank offices whereas among the remaining, 23.3% regards traditionalistic or well discipline, 5% high family background, and 3.35 famous as quality to hold high rank office. Thus, majority of youth emphasises on merit rather than other qualities.

8. Methods for Progress of the Country

The respondents were asked to mention how can a country make a progress? Their responses are shown in table 7.

Table 7: Methods to make the Country more Progressive

S. No.	Methods for Progress of the Country	Frequency	Percent
a.	People should do hard work.	11	18.3
b.	Ensuring good education facility by all individuals in their family.	33	55.0
c.	Better planning of programmes by the Government	16	26.7
d.	To depend on God or Fate	0	0.0
	Total	60	100.0

The data shows that most of the respondent consider ensuring good education facility by all individuals in their family (55.0%), better planning of programmes by the government in case of 26.7% respondents and hardwork in case of 18.3% respondents. No one regarded fate or god for this.

9. Opinion on Family Planning:

The respondents were asked to express their views on family planning. Their responses are shown in table 8.

Table 8: Views on Family Planning

S. No	.Methods for Progress of the Country	Frequency	Percent
a.	Couples should follow the rules of family planning and have a small family so that they can bring up their children in a better way.	55	91.7
b.	Large families are better as larger number of people can give strength to the family both economically and in terms of power	5	8.3
	Total	60	100.0

The data show that most of the respondent (91.7%) have modern attitude towards family planning and thinks that couples should follow the rules of family planning and have a small family so that they can bring up their children in a better way whereas only 8.3% of them have traditional belief that large families are better as larger number of people can give strength to the family both economically and in terms of power.

10. Relation of Being Atheist and Good Person:

The question tries to find out the belief system of youth and how much it impact their attitude towards the perspective of others. According to the respondents 36.7% percentage of them believe that an atheist is surely a better person and have good values whereas 21.7% of them belief that being atheist is not good and they creates orthodox system in the society . Whereas 41.7% of the respondents that is the highest in numbers believe that there is no relation in being atheist and good person as it depends on individuals moral. It clearly shows that though there is a traditional attitude in this regard still youths are leading towards a modern and rational thought process.

11. Changing attitude towards Working Women

This variable has been taken into consideration to find out the opinions of youth on the fact that whether the exposure to new media have changed the attitude towards working women class or not. Most (68.3%) of the respondents feel that it has positively changed the attitude while less than one-third (30.0%) of them believe that it has changed to some extent. Only few (1.7%) of the respondents believe that there is no change in this perspective. The analysis clearly indicate that the exposure to new communication technologies has made a positive attitude among the youth in this regard.

12. Destruction of local cultures and Traditions due to Social Media

The respondents opinion regarding the negative impact of new media on the society indicate that one-third (33.3%) of the respondents believe that social media is destroying the traditional peculiarities of a culture, while two-fifth (40.0%) of them believe that it is destroying to some extent

only; however, a little more than one-fourth (26.7%) of them think that there is no impact of social media in destruction of local cultures.

Conclusion

On the basis of the above mentioned analysis following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The exposure of the youth to new communication technologies is very high (100%);
2. The fact that 53.3% of the users spend 4 to 6 hours in social media clearly shows that the young generation is highly depending on the virtual world to create a relationship with others. Many variables including preference of educational system through online or digital mode (75.0%), preference of watching educational content and news on web (46.6%) other than entertainment section certainly describes that the urban youth are more aware of education both physically and virtually which is also evidenced by the fact that 88.3% of the respondents irrespective of all caste are having education level up to doctoral, post graduate and graduate or professional level which is a good indicator for development of the society.
3. Besides, conveying more attention on buying goods from online markets (100.0%), accepting the communication over mobile technology among both the primary genders (93.3%) and changing attitude towards working women due to communication system as they feel more secure and connected to go anywhere now (68.3%) etc. are also some of the variables showing that the correlation between mass media exposure and level of modernity carries out a positive relationship.
4. Apart from, mass media there are some other factors too that are responsible for deciding the level of modernity in the society i.e. the caste, economic conditions like income and occupation, family background of the respondent etc. But with the development of new communication technologies, the questions like caste, class etc. that were more prevalent in pre- globalization era are gradually becoming weak due to easy accessibility of educational and infrastructural amenities especially in digital modes and thus forming a linear form of homogeneity in all the above stated factors especially among youths of urban settings.
5. Some changes in the psychological and thinking process of the youths have also been observed like accepting the atheists, believing good education or better Government policies are needed for development, people should have good qualification for holding an office or views in family planning that smaller families are better for ensuring children's better future (91.7%) etc. are some of the changes towards the modernistic attitude.
6. However, there are some phenomenon like marriage system where the youth give preference to traditional system of marriage rather than online matrimonial, accepting love marriage but either within caste or in some conditions inter-caste marriages but not outside the religion etc. show that these are the some primary customs where people likes their own traditional norms and will take more time to acquire modern approach.
7. The opinion that social media destroys the local culture to some extent is also an element that shows that the techno-freak Indian youths are ready to welcome the modernistic aspects of the society but contrarily they are also endeavor to preserve their old cultural traditions. Mass media does not impact modernity as a whole but it immensely affects the thought process of people, sometimes by leading them towards modernistic opinions to discard socio- cultural inequalities and sometimes by checking the path of modernity to save the indigenous norms. But certainly in both of the conditions, the new communication technologies have become a part and parcel to establish modernity especially among the developing countries like India where the major section of population belongs to the age group of youths.

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