Impact on Socio-Cultural Identity

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Twenty-First century is witnessing tremendous advancements in the field of communication systems. Latest technologies have introduced numerous modes of communications and it has effectively left mankind fully dependent on it. Present day life is hard to imagine without the electronic gadgets like mobile phones, satellite or cable Television, Virtual Reality devices (VR) & Audio-Visual (AV) capturing devices, CCTVs, etc. These devices have become the part of our daily activities; our life style and we are used to communicate with it. Media's participation in social communication is as old as its origin but initially it was more for the purpose of disseminating information[1]. Being a medium of communication like language; media has matured in as *social media* and it has also started playing a vital role as of a language. We are no more relying only on spoken words, hand written letters, physical emotional gestures, and sensations through touch or so. Moreover, the modern and sophisticated electronic gadgets are redefining our perception and reliability about the understanding of communication and production of meaning without sensory organs and direct stimulations. Artificial sensory simulations are replacing basic emotional behavior involved in an individual and personalized physical interactions. Thus, it is creating a scope of multilayered communicative skills affecting the environment of media and society.

In the present time media is playing an important role in our day-to-day life by controlling our minute decisions and interfering in every act of our livelihood. It would not be an overstatement that media is running our lives. However, it does not mean that media has become an unrestrained occurrence. There is no doubt that by keeping entirely irresponsible and consumerist interests in mind this Neo-Capitalist Medium has embarked on enormous changes in the history of mankind. Media is a perfect facilitator for the expansion of multi-national corporations in the terms of globalization[2]. There is no doubt that the economic interests of corporates are deciding and driving the media primarily for their own use but still its other effects are influencing the socio-cultural order of mankind.

When media is used for corrupt political practices and becomes an instrument of power for them, then common people has to face the brunt and it has been clearly witnessed in the last four-five decades. Electronic media has the potential of creating deeper impact, as it is evident in the case of horrific 9/11 incidences. In fact, such an example of media's role already exists in India that has given a new turn to history of India. If we look at the political developments in Punjab during the decades of 80's and 90's then we can easily locate many happenings that occurred because of the irresponsible or mis-used media. The coverage of a tragic event (assassination/slain body of Indira Gandhi) was broadcasted uninterruptedly on Government media at National level from 31st Oct to next couple of days in 1984. It had so much of impact in the North and other parts of India that it changed the Indian history forever. Role of media at that time cannot be ignored in facilitation of spreading hatred. If we could see that period minus media then the face of today's history could have been a different. It was the very first major incidence when people realized the real impact of media. Even after this, many such unfortunate incidences occurred that have blown away the multi-faceted socio-cultural threads of our country. It has resulted in escalated mistrust and suspicion among people of India, who were otherwise living together even with full of diversities and many ideological differences until then. Political authorities also realized its importance and started using it as their tool of governance. Now the situation is such that in our every decision-making, likes-dislikes, happiness, etc., media influences everything. To articulate this reality more prominently, we

can say that the ever-expanding media has created serious issues and concerns for human cultural identity.

Here one can ask why cultural identity is so important or even required at all. Since identities are not fixed and are acquired in time and space. Then what is the point in identifying some fixed identities and not accepting the change? No doubt, these questions are very much valid and true to an extent. However, the other big question is of the Politics of Culture and Identity. Culture propagated and promoted by and for the Neo-Capitalist forces to globalize their market purely for the consumerist interests is certainly not the culture emerging out of its own. The present day popular culture taking shape through media on the *hyper-realities* actually does not exist on basic human grounds[3]. This type of consumerist culture is neither rooted nor routed from our own native Indian heritage.

Human life and identities takes shape with the basic elements like language, society and culture and it keeps changing with time. Although these elements which defines the human identity, keep changing but still at certain time and space some vital common elements constructs a unique and more stable identity on which changes takes place and influences transpires. It all happens more through modes of communication or media in particular. These mediums make changes possible and transmissible also. We create equilibrium between similarities and differences in life through language, society and culture. Especially language is among the very first modes of communication that has developed and expanded continuously with the ever-changing needs. The paradigm of culture is such that it helps in carrying forward and communicating the heritage of human values from one period to the next. It is very powerful and effective medium of communication operational at mass level. Besides being instrumental in interacting with the existing time, it also carries forward the very characteristics of the cultural identity embedded in the heritage. Similarly, in the present time also the identity of a Punjabi person that we could trace out, has acquired its characteristics through the operational cultural process rooted and routed in the heritage. It has also embraced the experiences of transformations and transitions like a language by means of required reactions and responses. Language structures its way by resolving various external tensions of influences emerging out of changing socio-economic orders, likewise cultural process also create dialogue with every kind of positive and negative influences and continue to keep and create its identity.

In the contemporary phase, rapid developments have created a new kind of identity issues for our society, culture and humanity. Rapid development and quick expansions of science and technology has made the basic and traditional identity characteristics/signs non-identifiable. Fundamental concerns of the life have lost under the hyper-real consumerist world. Due to the new technology, newest electronic gadgets have started controlling our day-to-day lives. Decisions regarding our needs and its fulfilment are also going out of the control of our mind and wisdom.

In this context, one important question arises as to when it all started happening and which forces are responsible for this. If we explore our contemporary society and culture then media emerges out as a most powerful medium that has challenged our value system, way of thinking and view of life. Now media is not merely a mode of communication but has become a strong weapon of governance for neo-capitalism. This medium is molding every need of man according to the required consumer class for benefit of capitalist system. First, it creates necessities and then to accomplish those created needs, advertisements pop-up. Mindless new ideals and icons of the personality or of living standards are constructed and propagated in the masses. Trans-national *Neo-imperialist* forces have used new media technology extensively to promote commercial and consumerist psyche in the society. Consumerist psyche has trapped people with newest and contemporary archetypal of commercial living that are becoming their inspirational factor. Moreover, the ideals virtuously followed by the people are changing very swiftly. Media has only strengthened and accelerated the expansion of this process.

Another important issue is that English has gained control over the majority of business language related to commercial activities across the world. To facilitate it further, communication mediums from normal to advanced and sophisticated media gadgets rely mostly on English. However, this time minor and major, all the Indian languages are equally facing this onslaught. For the expansion of capital, it is essential to reach to the consumer and the strategy operational in this regard has indeed benefitted some of the regional languages and cultures. Still the intentions are clearly not to promote native or local languages or cultures but to facilitate their commercial interests only. Media operates entirely with commercial interests and that is why showing various social and cultural programs for non-commercial purposes is not on its agenda. Main motive behind this is to exploit socio-cultural sentiments for selling their products. Moreover, programs aired on TV channels claiming to be raising the voice of common people, also appear to be farce and only catering to their commercial interest. Some big business groups or political parties have influences on every other TV channels. Contribution of TV channels for real social cause has reduced drastically. They only keep a particular social issue alive until they are getting sufficient TRP rating of viewership. Even the News channels are interested only in those news items that could fetch them more viewership; in which viewers find some sensation for a short time. Media has changed the taste of our likes and dislikes in such a way that we only like what TV channels wants us to follow. Media is deciding our interests and tastes on its own. As a result, it only exasperates unrest, mistrust and anger among masses with inconsistent drifting reports that shows no social commitment.

India is enjoying a robust democracy and a boisterous Media Industry. At the same time, global entertainment giants, whose business is trading in the U.S. or Britain, are journeying to India to make their business grow. Investing in newspapers and funding various News Agencies and T.V. Channels is the survival plan. It is equally true that Media now provides the facility of telecasting the regional T.V. Programs and News channel for its viewers. Daily broadcasting of the *Shabad-Gurbani* from Darbar Sahib, Amritsar is the best example. Online software have been developed for the translation of the *Shahmukhi* script into *Gurmukhi* and vice versa. Also, many websites are being run that deals with the Punjab and its heritage, namely, PTC Punjabi, Chardikala, Zee Punjabi, Time TV and MH One News. Such things may assure the viewers that they are connected to one another despite territorial boundaries. For instance, in the case of Panjabi TV channels, Panjabi language and culture appears only in popular forms like songs, videos, films, drama or advertisements, etc. However, the way in which exploitations and distortions are happening is the matter of concern. Panjabi language is now borrowing words directly from English resulting in diminishing use of Panjabi idiom and the profusion of English terminology. It is true that a language grows in interaction with other languages but in present time, it is only a one-way process. Roman script is being used for text messages or SMS on mobile phones. On the Internet also, English is a preferred script for search-engines no matter even if they are providing search facilities in other Indian languages as well. Cyber world has changed the way we use language.

There are several other kinds of developments as well. The kind of impact Panjabi popular culture has enjoyed all over India till now, Panjabi language has also got impetuous as one can find Popular Panjabi songs and phrases being enjoyed at every nook and corner of India be it North-East or South or East or West. This happened due to Bollywood film industry and Private TV channels that are exploiting the commercial flavor of this language and culture to mark an impact on consumers for the consumption of their products in the form of commodity or an idea. This very exploitation of language and culture is indeed helping them to achieve their desired goals but they have no social agenda to promote this language or culture, because they cannot have it. When a national level channel addresses whole of India through its daily serials and advertisements, their structure of presentation is shaped mostly in north Indian language and culture, in that also Panjabi language and culture dominates. Let it be their life-style, attires

or diction most of the presentation is colored in Panjabi style. In a way this language and culture has become a kind of commodity for exploitation. Nevertheless, it is also being exploited at the same time.

Every other Hindi song succeeds only if it uses at least few Panjabi lines or tune. Short Panjabi idioms or phrases got popular everywhere, even in non-Hindi speaking regions of India. Any Indian can understand and enjoy the beat of Panjabi folk dance and folk songs. That is how the trend of fusion music is more prevalent in Panjabi and it is very popular all over India and abroad. It is perfectly suitable for consumption and it has become an item for consumption. In other words, today's popular Panjabi culture is consumable item and like any other consumable product carrying expiry date, it will go the same way. Market economy has least social commitment, so it needs no reason to stop exploiting any language or culture like a commodity until it reaches its expiry date. Since this emerging or prevalent consumer-culture has no roots in reality, it has grown in hyper-world, so it is not sustainable for longer period.

But a big question arises as to what is being shown as Indian culture in media; is it anywhere close to those characteristics, which it has acquired through ages right from pre-Vedic and Vedic era? So many cultural exchanges have happened on this geographical space of India and have shaped its identity. Even then one can still find distinct traits of cultural and unique racial imprints of past in today's language, life-style, eating habits, clothing's, etc. If we look at the past then we will realize that it all transpired in a very natural and spontaneous manner with interaction and dialogue. Now it is not happening naturally or spontaneously. This process of change does not have any roots and directions. It is purely a commercial exploitation and shall collapse once it stops yielding to consumerist interests.

In today's post-modern phase of situations, local languages, societies and cultures are gaining some kind of attention even though it all started with exploitative policies of neo-capitalist system. Trans-national companies are going deep into the villages to sell their products. There are numerous Panjabi Channels doing business and surviving on the advertisements given by these big companies. To reach the common people of urban and rural areas of poor nations, media is using their local heritage. Big trans-national companies have no objection to a village folk in his ethnic dress pulling out bottles of cold drink from a village well (Thanda matlab Coca-Cola)[4] .

The cause of concern is that the new generation is merely enjoying beats and tunes based on Panjabi folk music without understanding the real meaning. Visuals or videos shown on music channels hardly have any relation with the lyrics. This has created a very strange situation for language and culture where people are viewing, listening and enjoying the flavor of culture and language without understanding the meaning. This is precisely what consumer culture is all about. Enjoyment is driving the culture and language like commodities in market for sheer profit making. There are several websites related to Panjabi culture. Among these sites, many are related to Sikh Gurus and Sikh history. One can hear devotional music (Shabad Gurbani) and watch kirtan videos as well. Along with this, folk songs and folk music is also available on Internet. Every type of Panjabi music is available starting from old singers to latest. Songs and videos are of aesthetically good taste and of vulgar taste as well. Since this medium has least control so, every kind of material is freely available. It has indiscriminate access for all whether they are children or adults. It is affecting our traditional process of acculturation.

There is no doubt that media has attained an important role in the process of acculturation. Music channels like MTV are important examples for propagating pop culture based on western or American life-styles. Programs and advertisements on these channels are especially designed keeping in mind the young consumers. Present youth of urban as well as rural area is growing with these images and imitating those silver screen American life-style behaviours instantly. These channels hardly show anything of Indian society and culture worth to follow.

They are creating a new class who is getting its ideals from hyper-real world. For them good human beings are not ideals any more, they follow flickering fashionable visuals only and try hard to recast their body and mind according to new trends. In this way, they are losing socio-cultural ground and living in imaginative hyper-real world. It has affected the very threads of relationships also. Instant gratification has become the goal of life. Fast moving images on TV screens and quickly changing themes are also affecting mental ability to memories or think. This is what the consumer culture based market economy wish to achieve. They want just consumers, without brain and thoughts. It has become a boon for media industry, advertising companies and above all the big trans-national corporations.

Worse, Media itself is granting favors to the corrupt politicians and government party. Taking help of a regional language, they influence the audience's mind and construct their common beliefs and interests. Such Media tactics are driving out public expression of anger and violence against the particular entity. This is another point in question of innocents being targeted without any fault. Media is a new Godman, feeding public with fake facts, in which the majority of the information is a trash. Any controversial incident, say, cultural intolerance, University protests or gender discrimination is projected only to manipulate the young minds. Talking head constantly gives quick information, on the basis of which one analyze improper results. The critical thinking takes a back seat. Resultantly, one becomes misinformed and vulnerable to the biased judgement. Yet the impact of the Media has been such that one begins to prefer ignorance over knowledge. Over and above, the flashy online social Media and Digital Media Corporation is intriguing the teens and adolescents to savor their online presence. Though it allows one to be connected to the distant family and friends with the help of a single channel, but there is also a dangerous side to it. A common man spends an average 6-7 hours on social Media like Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram. When the daily life is filmed through fancy posts of pictures and private chats, wouldn't the privacy be compromised? From the whopping private chats to the IP address of the computer, the channel has the record of everything stored in it. It stays for long. Isn't it puts one's confidentiality to the risk of getting exposed by government spying or evil agendas. Hence, it serves no purpose in real except keeping oneself in trouble and suffering through unwelcome rumors and gibes.

The role of social media has gained importance over other mediums of communication. The basic mode of communication has always been the language whether it is in audio or in visual expressions. Every socio-cultural order is constructed through language and other mediums of communication. We are living in a reality constructed by language and its essence as Discourse. Discourses are created both at micro and macro level to produce, convey and understand the meaning out of communicative expressions (Audio & Visual). It is an interesting area of study to explore the relationship between the Language and Social media and how it's playing with the idea of Common Sense. The information disseminated through social media may create or influence a short-term discourse but it is not generating proper or authenticated knowledge. Even then, it is indeed a new and potentially alternativee site of knowledge generation. Human behavior has changed with regard to memorizing things for longer, forgetting quickly, giving impulsive responses, accessing information about many things but generating less knowledge and so on. Social media has leaded the society in the direction of creating argumentative minds with less authentic and logical information. The Space between the Sender and the Receiver is like a playground to construct, deconstruct and manipulate the production of meaning. Social Media has provided and facilitated a new kind of platform to with play with Common Sense. The important fact is that any meaning created, generated or perceived is not free from distortions and no medium or media is reliable enough to understand the true meaning of original or more authentic idea.

If Neo-capitalist intelligentsia is interfering in the process of acculturation by studying it and using it for its own purpose then it can be safeguarded against such harmful designs. By

identifying and studying human culture, we can change it in desired direction. As of now, market-forces are driving this whole process according to their wishes. Our own rich cultural heritage has enough strength to respond to this critical situation and to create a dialogue for bringing equilibrium in the present time. All we need is to have confidence in our own evolved and ever progressing knowledge and intellectual traditions that matured over the centuries on this soil. The issue is how to stop a person of becoming just a consumer subject and his human existence to become merely a mechanical? Surely, this is a serious challenge for those who care about their culture. It is also true that in facing this challenge media can play an important role. So the Media's deep impact is a matter of concern and it has been debated for long. The anxiety is more about the direction in which the society is going. Because of these concerns, it is difficult to draw a balanced approach for assessing the impact of media on society and culture. However, it is more important to find out how deeply our socio-cultural habits, values and sentiments are being influenced.

Notes:

Hyperreality: In semiotics and postmodernism, hyperreality is an inability of consciousness to distinguish reality from a simulation of reality, especially in technologically advanced postmodern societies. Hyperreality is seen as a condition in which what is real and what is fiction are seamlessly blended together so that there is no clear distinction between where one ends and the other begins. It allows the co-mingling of physical reality with virtual reality (VR) and human intelligence with artificial intelligence (AI). Individuals may find themselves, for different reasons, more in tune or involved with the hyperreal world and less with the physical real world.

(*https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperreality*)

Tiffin, John; Nobuyoshi Terashima (2005). "Paradigm for the third millennium". Hyperreality: 1.

Simulation : Simulation is characterized by a blending of 'reality' and representation, where there is no clear indication of where the former stops and the latter begins. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance; "It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal." Baudrillard suggests that simulation no longer takes place in a physical realm; it takes place within a space not categorized by physical limits i.e., within ourselves, technological simulations etc.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperreality#Simulation.

Baudrillard, Jean (1994). *Simulacra & Simulation* (PDF). The Precession of Simulacra: University of Michigan Press. p. 1.

Sender-Receiver:

According to the Shannon-Weaver Model, communication includes the following concepts: sender, encoder, channel, decoder, receiver and feedback. Furthermore, there is also concept of "noise", which affects the communication process going through the channel and makes the message more difficult to understand by the receiver.

Shannon, Claude. "A Mathematical Theory of Communication". Bell System Technical Journal. 27: 379–423, 623–656.

New Imperialism: In historical contexts, New Imperialism characterizes a period of colonial expansion by European powers, the United States, and Japan during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.[1] The period featured an unprecedented pursuit of overseas territorial acquisitions. At the time, states focused on building their empires with new technological advances and developments, making their territory bigger through conquest, and exploiting their resources.

Punjabi TV Channels
- Chakde TV
- ChardiklaTime TV

- DD Punjabi - owned by Doordarshan Network
- Fateh TV
- PTC Punjabi
- SANJHA TV
- Zee Punjabi - owned by Zee Network
- ABP Sanjha
- Apna News
- Chakde TV
- MH One News
- Prime Asia TV - currently available in Canada and the US
- PTC News
- Punjab TV News
- ONLY MUSIC(HD)--Canada
- 9X Tashan - owned by 9X Media
- Balle Balle
- MH One
- MTV Beats
- PBN Music
- PTC Chakde
- Sikh Channel
- Fateh TV
- Gurbaani TV
- Ik Onkar

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[1] Trenholm, Sarah; Jensen, Arthur (2013). Interpersonal Communication Seventh Edition. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 360–361.

[2] Held, David; Goldblatt, David; McGrew, Anthony; Perraton, Jonathan (1999). Global Transformations Cambridge: Polity Press. ISBN 9780745614984

[3] *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyperreality*

[4] *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QmdZbNMowkE*