

## Dynamics in Social Platforms to Understand Culture: A View from Visual Anthropology

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### ABSTRACT

*In the modern era, social media platforms are playing a key role in understanding the critical concepts of subjects in a simple way. Post-Covid days has proved that even children, academicians are also using system and mobile phones to attend their daily class and even many meeting are organized in digital platforms. A Systematic and meaningful history of ethnographic films, short films, and documentaries on biographies, festivals, arts, and environments related to glimpses of the life and culture of Indian people are presented by various resources to understand and enhance their knowledge. Moreover, the present generation is unable to focus on just lectures but is in need of audio-visual aids to understand the issues. At this significant juncture, this paper highlights the Visual Anthropology, a sub-branch of cultural anthropology concerned with the study of human behaviour through visuals using anthropological techniques. Visual Anthropology helps in the observation of Dance and other kinds of performance, Museums and archiving, Histories, Sand paintings, Tattoos, sculptures, and relics, Cave paintings, Scrimshaw, jewellery, Hieroglyphics, paintings, and Photographs in the past and present. The Scope of Visual Anthropology is about to gain much more popularity in India. Visual Anthropology is going to play an important role in the empirical, methodological, and theoretical conceptualization of Anthropology in the near future.*

**Keywords:** Social media, Ethnographic films, Visual anthropology, Anthropological techniques

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Communication is a key tool that anthropologists use to understand social and cultural environment by focusing on each and every aspect of the social and cultural life of a nation. The developments in communication systems in modern India made the global thoughts and interactions without great effort. In the present digital world, social media is more than just a means of communication. Moreover it is an effective mediator of Cultural Revolution, revealing and changing the collective thinking of humans. Especially in India, a multiethnic and multicultural societal country, social media plays a remarkable influence in rethinking and influencing the cultural view of one another. Considering the main aim of social cultural



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Anthropology that is to understand and appreciate the diversity in human behavior. Moreover Culture stands for the sum total of all human behaviour - verbal and non-verbal - and all human made products - material and non-material and the way of life of a particular society is culture. Edward Burnet Tylor (1871), English Anthropologist, "culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of the society". Therefore, it can be said that culture and communication is a related phenomenon that could express that culture is a communication process and communication is a culture process.

In 1960, when the concept of communication networking began and in order to smooth the functions of technical work, the US Defense Department introduced Advance Research Project Agency Network (ARPAN). ARPAN later by 1980 was used by 25 universities in different parts of the world. Finally in early 1990s, Internet was introduced and later in 1997, the social network started. The first social networking site was called "sixdegrees". Later, social networking grew. The use of social media and digital platforms such as Yahoo (1994), Google (1998), Skype (2003), Facebook (2004), YouTube (2005), Twitter (2006), WhatsApp (2009), Instagram (2010), Snapchat (2011) extended the limitation of communication, it has enabled people to know about various topics, share ideas, opinions, criticize and grievance in real time. Social and digital platforms have become central to understand contemporary and past cultures, that are serving as digital arenas where people express identities, beliefs, and practices in the forms of a Systematic and meaningful histories of ethnographic films, short films, and documentaries on biographies, festivals, arts, and environments related to glimpses of the life and culture of Indian people are presented by various resources to understand and enhance their knowledge. The reluctance of such studies that involves understanding the modernization and globalization in anthropology continues, since pre-war to the post-war, in the twentieth century. But with the emergence of mass media and mediated cultural practices globally, anthropologists started engaging with the studies on digital technologies effectively. Visual anthropology, which emphasis the study of culture through visual representation, provides a powerful lens to explore these dynamics. It is worth noting that the present time may be regarded as the transitional stage between the traditional and ultra modern era. This article explores the profound influence of social media on cultural shifts, transitioning from collective roots to individual branches within global cultures. It elaborates the various changes that have occurred during the process of development and evolution in the cultural view point. It argues that changes of culture due to advancement of technologies and use of social media, the human being a social personal they generally use to live collective in colonies and emphasizing communal harmony, interdependence, and adherence to societal norms but due to usage of digital equipment's the individual prioritizes are come up and social interaction are getting less day after the day. Moreover, the pursuit of the belongingness is also becoming less.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The study is based on observation, interviews and group discussions. They were conducted on aged groups and qualitative data were collected on the changing dynamics in regard to culture through visual anthropology views.

### III. ANALYTICAL LANDSCAPE

#### ***About the Modern Human and Lamarck's Theory of Evolution (1809)***

The Modern human being, evolved from 55-85 million year ago after passing from the early primates stage such as tree dwellers like lemurs, tarsiers, monkeys, apes, Early Hominis, Australopithecines, Homo habilis, Homo erectus, Homo heidelbergensis, Homo neanderthalensis, Homo sapiens. The key stages include the development of bipedalism, larger brains and tool use. The Homo genus was marked by increasing brain size and complex behaviors. This evolutionary path is shaped by genetic, environmental, and cultural factors. In early days, necessity played a major role in innovations. The early human was alone then, only after verbal and non-verbal developments; they started living in bands and led to development of fire, wheel etc. Here we can clearly understand that early human used to communicate and work with each other to transform to a public good. With advent of modernization, the interdependence of one other is becoming weak.

In these context, the French biologist Jean – Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829) hypothesized that the “use and disuse theory” wherein in Lamarck proposed that an organism’s organs and structures develop or shrink depending on their usage. Lamarck in his publication "Philosophie Zoologique" ("Zoological Philosophy", 1809) believed that if an organism uses a particular organ very frequently, it would become stronger and more developed, whereas organs that were not used would deteriorate eventually and disappear. For example, Lamarck says that in case of use theory, ancestral giraffes stretched their necks to reach leaves high in trees. Over generations, this repeated stretching led to the elongation of the neck, which was then passed on to offspring and an example in case of disuse theory, Indoreonectes evezardi, a species of blind fish who lives in dark caves, eventually lost its visual ability as its eyes became smaller or even disappeared over generations. So as human beings are mostly depending on the technology, supposing the use of calculator is vast that some of them slowly losing their calculation abilities.

#### ***Anthropologists and Their Thoughts***

Anthropologically, Alfred Cort Haddon, (1855-1940) British anthropologist was first to document anthropological film by using scientific equipments and later followed by the eminent anthropologists like Franz Boas and Mallinowski. The anthropological museums are acting as Platforms to notice the culture changes. Especially the anthropological museum of Anthropological Survey of India is treasure of material cultural which includes paintings, photographs, artifacts that depicts etc. Now-a-days photographs and video of the respondents and field work of researcher are becoming mandate to substantiate the Data. The visual anthropologists are concerned about the dependance of present human on the Artificial Intelligence and social media. Likewise, Lamarck's Theory of Evolution, use and disuse theory, the artificial intelligence and development is also affecting the culture. In the past, 1980's where the transport facilities are low, people use to walk kilometers to receive their relatives to their villages and it has been a real scene of affections and social bonds. But due to improved transport facilities, the customs of receiving the guest to village was vanished. To discuss more in detail, In 1970's to 1990's the people use to listen to radio for news and entertainment where they used to work simultaneously and enjoy the music, understand the contemporary global



affairs, but the advent of Television replaced radio usage. The television (black and white) slowly occupied major role in the communication era in 1980's. Watching Television involves the act of seating opposite to it, looking at it, enjoying the music, and understanding the contemporary global affairs. Comparatively television distracted humans from their regular activity to some extent. In addition to radio and television, smart phones rapidly concurred the global era where the human brain are addicted to daily activities such as to know the time, calculation, alarm, Google maps, order foods, glossaries other essentials in Amazon, Flipkart and daily economic transactions.

In 1970's and 1980's the songs are found with meaning full lyrics and pleasant music but now a days the music beats are high and lyrics are unable to understand. With advent of more musical equipments the lyrics are not heard but only the bass music is noticed mostly. In present generation, the emails and WhatsApp communication have almost made the post services business to nil. After post COVID Era, in the point of "Communication and Cultural dynamics", the digital technology took many changes. In educational sector, the online classes have become a part of practice. The younger generations are in need of audio-visual aids to understand the scientific classes along with lectures. The smart classes can be treated as the examples of cultural dynamics. To add more the marriage ceremonies are going online streaming to an extent it is good for people's convenience but it can hamper the social gatherings, which improves the humanity and social bonding. Marriages in the past were celebrated like a festival which included many events such as dances, games and storytelling. If see the Dorla tribes of Chhattisgarh, the marriages involve multi events that lasts for three days which includes pre-wedding rituals, the main wedding and the post wedding rituals.

When there were no electricity facilities, the older people used to tell the stories to kids on nature related things such as what is moon and sun in the late evenings, oral histories of kings and kingdoms related to their regions which used to inspire them in life, and folklores but nowadays this kind of tradition has vanished because of the social media now a days kids not able to spare time to study the said stories and there were many regional, folk games that are going vanish because of the lack attention. The digital technology should be restricted a limit in daily life because nowadays children are addicted to mobile cartoon and it should be limited. Because of modernity the kids are using spectacles and behaviour patterns are becoming abnormal sometimes. Furthermore, the political leaders using social media accounts have gained much mileage to reach the public. The political leaders are now using social media as a powerful means of campaign and pass the every day greetings during occasions and festivals. For instance In USA Election, the American President Obama was the first politician who successfully used social media for his campaigning and communication during elections. He successfully won the US presidential election through the effective use of social media and banners. In India, Bharatiya Janata Party and Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, effectively used the social media platforms to come into power in 2014, 2019, 2024 General Elections. There is a need to understand the incorporation of technology in daily activities and its effect on culture.

In point of time, it is argued that digital technologies and social media platforms should restrict their content towards welfare of societies. They may be suggested to work on the subject matter such as cultural documentaries on unexplored area like

Ghotul, tribes of India and elevated the great works of prominent personalities of India. The documentation of culture and tradition, and dissemination of cultural object fosters a continuity of identity to the people which propagates a dynamic of cross-cultural appreciation. The Digital platforms are mini-knowledge centers to save time and acquire knowledge. In Economic scenario, Digital platforms by using application to online buying such as PhonePay and Google Pay and they are becoming a part of basic globalization and necessity. Further the researchers are now combining the visual media and ethnographic research to provide a greater understanding and In fact, it can reach to large public in easily ways. Now social media is not technology but a life style, in 2010 as per the Internet penetration (population access to internet) rate in 12.6% whereas in 2022 it is 48.7%.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Technological advancements, particularly in communication, have transformed human interactions and lifestyles. The transition from radio to television, and now to smartphones and social media, has altered the way people consume information and engage with the world. While these technologies offer convenience and new forms of connectivity, they also contribute to a decline in traditional social practices and face-to-face interactions. The influence of digital technology extends to various aspects of life, including education, entertainment, and political engagement. Online classes and smart education tools have become integral in the post-COVID era, while social media platforms have revolutionized political campaigning and public communication. However, the pervasive use of digital devices has also led to issues such as reduced physical activity, increased screen time, and changing behavioral patterns in children. To moderate the potential negative impacts of technology on culture, it is crucial to promote content that promote cultural appreciation and social welfare. The article brings out the need for a balanced approach to digital technology engagement, requesting the general public, policy makers, educators, and technology developers to consider the broader societal implications of social media on the various factors of culture, by prioritizing policies and platform designs that support communal well-being. This holistic perspective underscores the importance of navigating the complex of digital culture with an understanding of its impacts on individual identity and collective social dynamics.

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