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## Digital Networks as the Incubators of Social Change: An Evaluative Study on the Participatory Culture in the Digital Environment and the Paradigm Shift in the Society

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**Abstract:** It is a celebrated fact that the technology-fueled digital- network enables the ordinary citizens to actively participate in the democratic movements and activities through autonomous self-mass communication. As internet related networks proliferate and people becomes more media literate, drastic changes occur in politics, commerce, business, education and all most all human transactions. Twitter revolutions, web war, Facebook rebellions, social media activism etc are common today. According to Manuel Castells, the multi modal digital networks of horizontal communication are the fastest and the most autonomous, interactive, reprogrammable and self-expanding means of communication in history (Castells. 2012). In a way, they can be described as the 'incubator' of modern democracy. In this background, this research attempts to decode the digital environment and participatory culture in the democratic postmodern public sphere with particular reference to the battle of Seattle, Tunisian revolution, Arab uprisings, Occupy Wall Street protest (OWS) etc. The findings of the study expose that the ordinary people-powered movements unsheltered 'big goliaths' with smart gadgets such as internet and mobile devices and 'internet make David the new Goliath' (Nicco Mele); or 'democracy is only a tweet away' and 'if we want to liberate a society it is enough to give the citizens the Internet' (Cooper. 2011). We also realize that these leaderless movements are long term tools for strengthening democracy and enhancing freedom and radical change in the society (Castells. 2012). Moreover, it will alter the concept of media generation, consumption and dissemination; encourages new life style of e-transaction and m- transaction; wipes out intermediaries and gate keepers and carries decentralization of power. The methodology employed here is content analysis, mainly depending on the secondary sources consisting of books, academic research articles etc. Textual analysis of some of the important videos and TED talks of prominent media scientists such as Manuel Castells, Henry Jenkins, Howard Rheingold are also employed here for enumeration.

**Keywords:** digital environment, networked society, digital incubator, whistle blowers, blogosphere, web war, twitter revolution, participatory culture, 'm- powerment', user generated content, 'produsage', piped piper syndrome, feudalistic hegemony, 'CNNisation', 'Al-Jazeeraization'

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The blooming digital ecology, consisting of networked mobile devices, social networking sites, websites, micro blogging and video sharing sites are dramatically changing and transforming the entire human activities. Twitter revolutions, web war, Facebook rebellions, social media activism etc are common today. According to Manuel Castells, these multi modal digital networks of horizontal communication are the fastest and the most autonomous, interactive, reprogrammable and self-expanding means of communication in history (Castells. 2012). In a way, this digital network can be described as the 'incubator' of modern democracy.

'The End of Big: How the Internet Makes David the New Goliath' (Nicco Mele.2013) throws light in to this digital environment and describes how the ordinary people-powered movements unsheltered 'big goliaths', with smart gadgets such as internet and mobile devices. "Radical connectivity- our breathtaking ability to send vast amounts of data instantly, constantly, and globally- has all but transformed politics, business and culture, bringing about the upheaval of traditional 'big' institutions and the empowerment of upstarts and renegades." (Nicco Mele. 2013). We have witnessed this in the Arab uprising, Tunisia's Jasmine revolution, Twitter revolts, battle of Seattle, 'Occupy Wall Street' (OWS) movement etc.

This blogosphere to the public sphere traffic is instant, interactive, borderless, convergent and participatory. It avoids intermediary, gatekeepers and agenda setters. Thus, it has often been considered as a discourse and

democracy in Hebermasian terminology (Jürgen Habermas. 2002). This 'act of a citizen, or group of citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, sharing and disseminating news and information' (Bowman and Willis, 2003) is often referred as "participatory journalism", "citizen journalism" or "user - generated content" (Domingo et al.2008). 'This participatory media culture, contrasts with older notions of passive media spectatorship' (Henry Jenkins. 2006). Thus, modern history witnessed a new breed of young dynamic activists and information workers such as Salam Pax<sup>i</sup>, Malala Yusuf Sai<sup>ii</sup>, Fara Baker<sup>iii</sup>, Edward Snoden<sup>iv</sup>, Julian Assange<sup>v</sup>, Muhamed Bouazizi<sup>vi</sup>, Natalia Morar of Moldova<sup>vii</sup>, Kahled Said<sup>viii</sup> and many more nearby us.

In this multi-step networked convergent platform, distance collapses; one way lecturing demolishes; virtual networks and communities proliferate; transforms 'voyeurs to participants'; moves power away from the 'author' into the hands of the 'audience'; maintains decentralization of power in all sectors; transforms the whole human dealings of commerce, economics, industry, education and health in to 'e- transaction' or 'm-transaction'; 'm-powers' human life style and habits.

Since this culture is fast penetrating and globally reachable, it would generate networked economy and networked organizations. Hence, politics becomes internet politics and state becomes networked state (Manuel Castels. 2012. p.273). Digital culture of hyper-linked user-generated- navigable content will transform the concepts of Journalism and Media. Mobile phones and internet will make us 'alone- together' by creating virtual communities (Sherry Turkle. 2011).

But, with all these optimistic pictures there are certain bullying elements: networks both connect and disconnects! Though many of us think that this new medium is completely free and under the control of users, there are 'big brothers' such as Google, Facebook and Microsoft who always monitor us. Who knows exactly what Facebook is doing with our personal data? Is there any guarantee that the Internet surfing and chatting will not lead our younger generation to a 'pied piper syndrome'?<sup>ix</sup> (Rafael Fermoselle. 2016). As the whistle blower<sup>x</sup>, Edward Snoden has commented, 'everyone is under surveillance now' (Edward Snoden. 2014). A hidden camera may be watching you always whenever you are networked. Net neutrality, destructive uses of internet, net addiction etc. is other concerns.

Our exploration mainly focuses on the different aspects of the network culture of digital environment and participatory model of creation, dissemination and consumption of the information. For this, we will elaborately examine the recent digital democratic movements starting from Seattle to Jasmine Revolution and Arab uprisings as well as survey the digital political campaigns of Barak Obama. The results of the study exposes to re- think the traditional forms of communication style and urges for a paradigm shift in different sectors. People might be more and more smart and 'm- powered'. Digital divide would be condensed. Those who are not virtually wired or connected to this networked digital nervous system will be gradually eliminated though they may think that they are powerful (Bill Gates.1999). Another revelation of the study may be Wael Ghonims'- marketing manager for Google and an online activist who created the Facebook page that helped organize the Arab protest- famous expression "if we want to liberate a society just give the citizen the Internet" (Cooper. 2011).

## **2. METHODOLOGICAL FRAME WORK**

### **2.1. Research problem**

Digital environment, coupled with convergence and new technological innovation creates a networked culture that radically transforms the whole societal transactions. Internet banking, e- commerce, tele- medicine, virtual class rooms, smart classes and e- governance are some of the aspects of this culture. New innovations are taking place in the virtual world which may further reshape and redefine the concept of human life itself. This creates a new culture of freedom, people's power, participatory journalism; user generated content, autonomous communication, life style and way of thinking.

We should realistically approach to this socio- cultural changes and be able to foresee the vicissitudes that occur in related areas. For example, newspaper and television industry might undergo drastic changes since there are no digital migrants but only digital generation. New generation will read e-papers via i-pad; watch serials and news from smart gadgets; changes will occur in the way we gather, assemble and disseminate news; alternative media

voices will challenge the mainstream media barons as happened in the 'Al Jazeeraization'<sup>xi</sup> against the corporate feudalistic hegemony of 'CNNisation'<sup>xii</sup>.

Thus, people would be networked, empowered and democracy would flourish which might lead to a paradigm shift in many sectors. It is the role of the academia and social scientist to sort out this communication prototype through serious research and analysis and cultivate a media literate society accordingly.

## **2.2. Objectives**

### **2.2.1. General**

2.2.1.1. A critical survey of the modern digital environment with its beneficial characters.

2.2.1.2. A brief analysis of the myriad magnitudes of this network culture in socio- political- cultural sectors of India and abroad.

2.2.1.3. An appraisal of the digital participatory- sharing culture in socio- political sectors, such as the Arab uprising and related revolutions and the social media campaigns of US elections of Barak Obama in 2008- 2012.

### **2.2.2. Specific**

2.2.2.1. To find out how the concept of gatekeepers, agenda setting, intermediation and government control are overthrown and eliminated in the autonomous - participatory -sharing - culture.

2.2.2.2. To analyze the radical changes in the print- TV industry and the gradual modernization strategies they would undergo.

2.2.2.3. To investigate changes in the communication style after the proliferation of digital - networked- convergent media.

2.2.2.4. To discover the emergence of plurality of voices in the digital participatory world and find how it will help in future.

## **2.3. Hypothesis**

2.3.1. Division of reporter-reader; anchor- viewer; producer- consumer may slowly vanish in the future, since such a division becomes irrelevant in the network culture.

2.3.2. Decentralization or democratization of power is a fast phenomenon in the digital network.

2.3.3. The role of media conglomerates may diminish in the long run since monopoly of media is destroyed by the networked culture.

2.3.4. The government mechanism cannot block and control the flow of digital traffic since they are spontaneous, viral, and leaderless, occupy virtual space and translates this space into a physical reality.

## **2. 4. Theoretical frame work**

**2.4.1. Displacement theory:** Maxwell McCombs displacement theory argues that the viewership or readership of one particular media outlet, leads to the reduction in the amount of time spent by the individual on another media. With the proliferation of new media such as the internet and SNS, the amount of time individuals would spend on existing 'old' media, may gradually come to the end of such traditional media (Dimmick, J., Chen, Y., & Li, Z. 2004). For example, earlier the TV took away our time from other forms of communication such as reading or listening to the radio. Now, new media takes away the time from reading or watching TV. This is evident from the recent trends and statistics all over the world.

**2.4.2. Resource mobilization theory:** This study of social movements emerged in the 1970s argues that, social movements succeed through the effective mobilization of resources and the development of political opportunities for members. John D. McCarthy and Mayer Zald are the originators and major advocates of the economic version of this theory, while Charles Tilly and Doug McAdam are proponents of the political version. Recent social movements all around the world is a witness to this.

**2.4.3. Network Theory of Power:** Manuel Castells 'Network Theory' states that power relationships are the foundation of society and power in the network society is exercised through networks. Accordingly, networks are the primary unit of social organization; they are flexible; endlessly reconfiguring; have a fundamental logic tied to cultural meanings; and it has mobile boundaries such that they might as well be infinitely adaptable (Castells 1996, 470).

## **2. 5. Methodological analysis**

Textual analysis and content analysis are the main research techniques used here to decode the textual material. Textual analysis of some of the important videos and TED talks of prominent media scientists such as Manuel Castells, Henry Jenkins and Howard Rheingold are also employed here for enumeration. The major secondary sources are e-books, research journals, scholarly articles and previous television - news coverages.

## **2.6. Operational Definitions**

### **2.6.1. Digital environment**

The term digital environment in itself may not give us a comprehensive portrait of the digital communication activities of the 21st century. It is referred in different contexts by academicians and practitioners. For example, Kevin Robins begins his introduction to cyber space as a 'consensual hallucination' (Kevin Robins, 2000). It may be further explained as cyber space, information super highway, World Wide Web, Web 2.0, digital convergence, internet culture, social networking sites, new media, 'new-new-media' (Paul Levinson. 2013) etc. Some of the 10 flatteners such as public neta, workflow software, uploading, outsourcing, steroids - projected in 'the world as flat' also may be reflected here (Thomas Friedman. 2005). It can be compared to a 'digital nervous system' or the 'web life style', whereby technology transforms the 'business @ the speed of thought' (Bill Gates. 1999). However, the operational definition of this digital environment under our study may be the diffusion of internet and 'Network Society' as introduced by Manuel Castells.

### **2.6.2. Participation and sharing**

The entire digital activism, consisting of the activity of the netizen in the blogosphere, e-commerce, 'm-payment', political activism, social movements and content creation are intended by this. To go further, a 'Habermasian public sphere' is the one we mean by participation. This is a cyber-democratic network of universality, equality and synthesis- which would be an internet output and which will eventually transform into public opinion (Mark Poster. 1997). According to Castells, networks were an extension of power concentrated at the top of the vertical organizations that shaped the history of humankind (Castells.1996. p.5). We must let the notion of an information society or knowledge societies weaken, and replace it with the concept of the network society or participatory culture (Manuel Castells. p.40).

## **2.7. Scope of the study**

The diffusion of internet and digital technology tantalizes our lives to actively participate in it and all the related fields of human life are thus affected by it. Thus:

2.7.1. This would give us a flawless clarity towards the future style of democratic movements, political campaigns, media dissemination and consumption.

2.7.2. Furthermore, it awakens research concerns in related areas such as the 'm-pesa' money transaction; the e-shopping facility through 'Flipkart', Amazon or 'Snap deal'; the Ola- Uber taxi transportation model, 'm-powerment' in different sectors, various e-transactions, 'm-transactions' (mobile transactions) and Digital India projects etc.

2.7.3. The media scholars and educators need to design new courses on this culture and change their pedagogy accordingly. Converting a classroom in to mere smart rooms might not be enough for us today. We need serious study and research on this new area, especially how this transforms the human life, and society.

## **2.8. Research Plan**

The division of this research is as following: 1) Selected review of literature is given in the first section in a crisp form, which could be elaborated further; 2) The world of digital network and its different dimensions are explored

with the interpretations of social scientists and academia in the second part; 3) The third portion will scrutinize certain selected digital participatory movements starting from the 'battle of Seattle'; illustrates the nature and dimensions of social media political campaigns of US president Barack Obama; and briefly investigate the recent paradigm shifts in the media sector; 4) The hypotheses are substantiated at the end unit based on the detailed textual survey and recommendations and further research areas are followed by it.

### **2.9. Limitations of the study**

2.9.1. Only the positive aspects of the digital environment and participatory culture is discussed here where as there exists numerous demerits for this culture which needs more attention.

2.9.2. Most of the examples of the participatory culture included in this study are taken from western contexts. Though, there are instances from the Eastern contexts such as delhi Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's political movements of the Aam Admi Party (AAP) in which New Media was extensively used, the Delhi Nirbhaya gang rape and subsequent massive protests in Jantar Mandir Delhi, there are no ample scientific literature.

2.9.3. The case studies and examples included in our research, in and by itself are areas of elaborate doctoral research study but we have pointed out only a few elements of it in our research, which needs to be elaborated.

### **3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Secondary sources related with Internet, social networking sites, theories of network are discussed here. Since the influence of new media was very evident in the recent democratic political movements and revolutions, both of these are melded often.

Manuel Castells is one of the authorities in network theory and culture. His works are reference materials in the academia. His information trilogy: *the rise of the network society: information age, economy, society and culture* vol.1 (1996); *the power of identity* vol.11 (1997) and *end of millennium*: vol. 111 (1998) are well accepted works. *The internet galaxy, reflections on the internet, business and society* (2001); *the network society: a cross-cultural perspective* (2006); *networks of outrage and hope: social movements in the internet age* (2012); *change - the impact of the internet on society-a global perspective* (2013) are related literature which speaks vehemently on network culture that serves as a basic source for our study. His reflections from the TED talks are also used here.

Henry Jenkins, media professor in convergent media, is an authority in the participatory culture and new media and his works are good reference for our study. Some of his works such as *Rethinking media change: The aesthetics of transition* (2003); *Democracy and new media: media in transition* (2003); *Convergence culture: where old and new media collide* (2006); *Fans, bloggers, and gamers: exploring participatory culture* (2006); *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: media education for the 21st century* (2009), *Spreadable media: creating meaning and value in a networked culture* (2013), *Participatory culture in a networked era: a conversation on youth, learning, commerce, and politics* (2015); *What is participatory culture?* (2015) are basis for our digital media understanding.

Howard Rheingold from Stanford University is another authority in network culture and participation. He forms virtual communities and networked groups extensively. Some of his famous books such as, *Smart mobs: the next social revolution* (2002), *Net smart: how to thrive online* (2012), *Mind amplifier: can our digital tools make us smarter?* (2012) are useful resources for our study. His research article namely, *using participatory media and public voice to encourage civic engagement* (2005) gives insight in to the blogosphere and public sphere culture.

History witnessed and realized that blogs are bullets. These 'e- bullet-ins' are powerful enough to overthrow decades old regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and other Arab nations. Sean Aday, Henry Farrell, Marc Lynch, John Sides, and Deen Freelon (2012) in the research report, *Blogs and bullets 11- New Media and Conflict after the Arab Spring* elaborates this magnificently. These scholars analyze the role of social media in the Arab Spring protests of 2011-12 here. The authors utilize a unique dataset from bitly, the URL shortened commonly associated with social media. With these beat report data, the authors are able to test the role of new media in bringing down autocratic regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya.

Again, Aday, S. et al (2012) in *New Media and Conflict after the Arab Spring*, gives another version of the Arab uprisings of 2011-12 stating that it is difficult to demonstrate a unique causal role for it. New media do not fully

explain why the protests happened, when they did and why many ordinary citizens were willing to join in; but it operated as an organizing tool and more as a megaphone for broadcasting information. In Egypt, the majority of participants joined the protest after government had shut down access to the Internet and only 13% of Tahrir Square protesters relied on Twitter, far less than television (92%) and word of mouth (93%).

Lim Merlyna, starts her research article *Clicks, Cabs, and Coffee Houses: Social Media and Oppositional Movements in Egypt 2004-2011*, with a following joke which may be a good starting point as well as conclusion to our discourse: 'Hosni Mubarak, Anwar Sadat, and Gamal Abdel Nasser are having tea in the afterlife. Mubarak asks Nasser, "How did you end up here?". "Poison," Nasser answers. Mubarak then turns to Sadat: "What about you?", he asks. "An assassin's bullet," Sadat says. Sadat and Nasser then turn to Mubarak, "and you?" To which Mubarak replies: "Facebook. Thus, this study depicts how social media provided space and tools for the participation, sharing and expansion of networks that the authoritarian government could not easily control, the networks of labor opposition, new connections among middle-class, youth opposed to the regime, the circulation of stories about regime repression and police brutality. The role of digital technology especially the SNS in the Egyptian revolution is well articulated in this article.

*The Role of Social Media In Crisis Preparedness, Response And Recovery* (Jason Christopher Chans. 2010) helps us to know about five key characteristics of social media such as collectivity; connectedness; completeness; clarity and collaboration and how it is lending itself to be used increasingly to support crisis management functions. These five elements that start from collectivity and ending in collaboration, is a useful resource for any future steps.

"Democracy is just a tweet away" is again proved in, *the role of social media in political mobilization: a case study of the January 2011 Egyptian uprising* (Madeline Storck. 2011). A detailed insight in to the different social media, its role, background to the revolution, the timeline of events, how it became an organizational tool and how it acted as an alternative press in grassroots level are explained here. It gives light in to the movement for change - the *Kefaya* Movement- in 2004, which arose from the brutal death of a young blogger Khaled Said by police. The account of Wael Ghoneim, who helped to organize a call for a demonstration on 25 January in Cairo's Tahrir Square through a Facebook page entitled 'We Are All Khaled Said', whereby 50,000 people came, which later swelled to millions till 11 February 2011, when President Hosni Mubarak stepped down from power is a great case study for our treatise here.

Microsoft giants' *Business @ the speed of thought: using a digital nervous system* (Bill Gates and Collins Hemingway.1999) contributes the great benefits of information technology to the society, especially the emergence of digital nervous system (DNS). He states that the success or failure of any future business depends on the intelligent use of this digital nervous system. We realize that this statement is proved to be true in the digital e-networking era especially in business, commerce, banking, education, health care etc.

The digitalized revolutions are often denoted as *Revolution 2.0* (Wael Ghonim. 2012). This term was used by Wael Ghonim, one of the pioneers of the Egyptian revolution. The Facebook managed by him became the gathering place for a protest movement and it invited a revolution against injustice, corruption, torture and unemployment. This 'revolution' proved that the power of the people is greater than the people in power. It gives us the real picture of participatory journalism by providing the Facebook comments and real stories of the movement.

*The Digital Economy: Promise and Peril in the Age of Networked Intelligence* (Don Tapscott.1995) that describes the twelve characters of digital economy such as 'knowledge, digitization, integration, disintermediation, convergence, innovation, presumption, immediacy, globalization and discordance' are relevant for our topic. According to him, it will bring drastic changes in the areas such as healthcare, design and manufacturing, public relations, government, travel and tourism, learning and education, entertainment and media which is proved true today. His numerous works on network culture such as *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything* (2006), *Growing up Digital: The Rise of the Net Generation* (1997), *Who Knows: Safeguarding Your Privacy in a Networked World* (co-au. 1996), *Paradigm Shift: The New Promise of Information Technology* (co.aut. 1992) are also related literature of our study.

Paul Glisters (2008) *Digital literacy*; Fiona Cameron and Sarah Kenderdines (eds) *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage*; W. Lance Bennetts (2008) *Changing Citizenship in the Digital Age* ; Jamaica Thomas (2012) *People-*

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*Powered Politics: How the New Media affects Political Change*; Martha Fuentes Bautistas' (2012) *Mapping diversity of participation in networked media environments*; Christian Fuchs' (2007) *transnational space and the network society*; Kenneth Hacker and Jan Van Dicks' (2000) *What is Digital democracy*; Kevin Robins' (2000) *Cyberspace and the World We Live in*; John Armitage & Joanne Roberts' (2002) *Living with Cyberspace*; David Bells' (2001) *Introduction to Cyber cultures*; Steven Shaviros' (2003) *Connected*; Nicco Meles' (2012) *The End of Big: How the Internet Makes David the New Goliath*; *Social media: new platforms, new problems* (Hugo Homann.2013); *New media: Key concepts* (Nicholas Ganem and David Ber. 2011); Jan Servaes & Patchanee Malikhaos' (2005) *Participatory communication: the new paradigm?* are all related literature under review.

To conclude, all most all the literatures of digital media and participatory culture are interrelated and they explain the role of digital media in these movements. Participation, networking, many-to-many communication are all important themes on many of the above mentioned texts on new media too.

#### **4. DIGITAL NETWORK: THE INCUBATORS OF SOCIAL CHANGE**

##### **4.1. Introduction**

The digital networked society is labeled in different ways such as post-industrial society (Daniel Bell. 1973), 'post-fordism', post-modern society, knowledge society, 'telematic society' (Simon Nora and Alain Minc.1978), 'liquid modernity' (Zygmunt Bauman) and 'Network society' (Manuel Castells). But our main focus is on the network mechanism and its participatory dimension and its transformative power in changing the society in to more democratic way. From the enumerated case studies here, we realize that this virtual space act as an incubator of social changes and give birth to urban space (Castells. 2012).

##### **4.2. An overview of the diffusion of digital network**

One may not debate on the topic of diffusion of internet, a term related with the diffusion of innovation theory of Everette M Rogers, where there are different stages such as innovators, early adapters, early majority, late majority and laggards. Explosion of internet and wireless communication technology and platforms of information exchange is amazingly changing the entire concept of society in various intensities.

**4.2.1. Internet penetration:** Out of 7.24 billion people in the world, around 43% population (3.17 billion) has an internet connection. In 1995, it was less than 1% and the first billion was reached in 2005; the second billion in 2010 and the third billion in 2014 (Statista. 2016). According to the report (Mc Kinsey Global Institute. 2011), 'two billion people are connected to the internet, 8 trillion exchange hands each year through e-commerce, two-thirds of all business have a web presence of some kind, one third of small and medium sized business use web technologies and if internet is treated as a sector it has more GDS than agricultural sector. The power of network and connectivity is revealed in this extensive report prepared by analyzing the internet trends among 13 countries.

The official website of the World Wide Web consortium gives us a detailed statistics of the internet traffic such as internet users, website, emails, google search, blog posts, tweets send, videos viewed, photos uploaded, Tumbler posts, skype calls and so on in every second as it grows in real time! (internetlive.com. 2016). Millions of packets of information circulate on the Internet every second of every day. 95 % all the information existing in the planet is digitized and most of it is accessible in the internet and other networks (Castells.2014. p.17).

**4.2.2. Mobile, Smart phone, Mobile internet:** Mobile phone user penetration in 2013 worldwide was 56.5 %. In 2017 the expected growth is 4.77 billion. It may even rise from 61.1% to 69.4%. The global smartphone audience surpassed the 1 billion mark in 2012 and reached 1.75 billion in 2014. As of 2015, worldwide mobile phone internet user penetration was 52.7 percent. In 2017, more than 63.4 % of mobile phone users will access online content through their devices. Another report says that by the end of 2019, there may be 5.6 billion smartphone subscriptions (Ericsson Mobility Report. June 2014).

**4.2.3. Social Network Users:** The number of worldwide social network users is expected to grow around 2.5 billion in 2018, around a third of Earth's entire population (ref.Statista.2016). As of January 2016, some 52 % of users in North America accessed social media via mobile while the global mobile social penetration rate was 27%.

**4.2.4. Facebook:** Started by Mark Zukerburg in February 4, 2004, for Harvard students, FB became publicly available in 2006. By 2012 it had over one billion users and by 2015 it reached up to 1.59 billion (ref. Statista.2016).

**4.2.5. YouTube:** Started in 2005, today around 1 billion people use it regularly. Video views on you tube per day is 4 billion In 2012 it was estimated that over 72 hours of video a minute were being uploaded onto YouTube, and over four billion videos a day were being viewed from that site alone (refer digital stats. 2016).

**4.2.6. Pro-arm-produsage revolutions:** Thus, 'social media make it possible for everyone in the network to be simultaneously producer, distributor, and consumer of content; the asymmetrical relationship between broadcaster/media producer and audience that characterized 20th century mass communications has been radically changed and its power comes from the connections between its users; and finally it allows users to coordinate activities between themselves "on scales and at speeds that were not previously possible.' (Howard Rheingold). Thus it gives rise to the concept of "produsage" or the Internet user who is both a user and a creator of online content (Axel Bruns). It is also a "pro-am revolution" and "mass collaboration" (Charles Leadbeater. 2004) whereby professional- amateurs are the content creators and distinctions between amateurs and experts become blurred. Here media content production becomes increasingly shared, social, and collaborative in nature.

It is not an exaggeration to say that technology is like air (Don Tapscot.1996. p.37). It constitute the new social morphology of our societies allowing greater speed, drastically reducing the costs of production and dissemination of information, creation and growth of an online community of supporters, permitting the development of new forms of large-scale collective action entirely independently of formal organizations (Kreiss. 2012; Castells. 1996).

### **4.3. Characteristics and advantages of Digital Culture**

#### **4.3.1. Culture of autonomy**

Internet is a technology of freedom and it contributes to the rise of the culture of autonomy (Ithiel De Sola Pool.1973; Castells. 2006). Thus it mobilize a new paradigm in every domain of social life: in work it develops entrepreneurs, in media: interactive audience or 'produsage', in market: informed and proactive consumer, in education: informed critical thinkers, e- learners and m- learning pedagogy; in politics: participatory and self-generated political networkers; in government: participatory informed citizens (Castells.1996). This freedom and autonomy helps people to create different groups of their own interest and congregate in particular geographic places, in new media parlance the 'clusters' (Philip Cooke, 2002) and they build further inner- circles of networks and stay connected.

The recent participatory protests in Arab region have witnessed this autonomous style. Autonomous media activists produced by digital network, challenge the establishments irrespective of danger of death. Whistle blowers are the best example of this.

#### **4.3.2. Space of flows in convergent-multimedia platform:**

As a supplement to this autonomous culture 'prolific net generation' (Don Tapscot.1999) will grow up and the audience- would be the co- innovators, collaborators and contributors. So there is no producer- user distinction. Many- to-many media in the convergent technology helps every person connected to the network to broadcast as well as receive text, images, audio, video, software, data, discussions, transactions and links in multimedia platforms. This technical - structural characteristic of the network culture creates autonomous publishers, creative bloggers, content writers and followers.

Since the web permits anyone to become a producer, enormous amount of content would be generated. To appreciate the implications, one need only consider what is created on the web in the arc of a single minute: '100 hours of video on YouTube, 3.3 million comments on Facebook, 3,50,000 tweets, and 38,000 photos on Instagram (Intel.2012). Thus on FB, the average user was connected to 60 pages, groups, events; people interacted per month of 160 million objects (pages , groups, events); average user created 70 pieces of content per month ; 25 billion pieces of content was shard per month (Castells. 2006. p.18). Thus it creates a space of flows (Castells. 1996), free expression and chosen sociability.

#### **4.3.3. 'Glocal' interactiveness:**

Networks are amplifiers of the message by creating 'glocalness'-global and local networks simultaneously and close groups in borderless horizontal level. It mines niche communities by serving topical and hyper local audiences

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through digital mobile platforms. This group formation is in the grass root level where all kinds of people are involved.

Henry Jenkins, writes, "a participatory media culture contrasts with older notions of passive media spectatorship. Rather than talking about media producers and consumers occupying separate roles, we might now see them as participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules that none of us fully understands" (Jenkins 2006 : 3).

The web is not a one-way transmission belt like television; it's more akin to the telephone, allowing conversation, intimacy and debate by tapping into the fundamental human desire for self-expression and shared communication. Net theorists argue that Web 2.0 represents 'the largest increase in human expressive capability in history' (Clay Shirky. 2009). As the communications landscape gets denser, more complex and more participatory, the networked population is gaining greater access to information, more opportunities to engage in public speech, and an enhanced ability to undertake collective action.

In the political arena, as the protests in Manila demonstrated, these increased freedoms can help loosely coordinated local public's demand for change.

#### **4.3.4. Destruction of intermediaries & virtual democracy:**

Elites would no long control the broadcast tools. They have always owned both the printing press and distribution networks which made them the gatekeepers of information flow. It helped them to frame the political debates and decide what is and what not news is. But networked broadcast tools increasingly allow netizen to publish and distribute their own news and redirect information flows. This is referred to as 'virtual democracy', 'cyber democracy' or 'tele democracy' (Kenneth Hacker. 2000). With a single keystroke, anyone can now push information out to millions of people and lift up marginalized voices into national- global spheres without any intermediation. This Scale and amplification is an important dimension of new media.

The information disseminated from network tools has no central place of production and it spread spontaneously and relentlessly. Demonstrations against World Trade Organizations in Seattle in 1999, the Occupy Wall Street protest in (OWS) in Wall Street USA, the Nirbhaya gang rape protest at Delhi in 2013 are all examples. The oppressed, exploited, marginalized and outridden find a new messiah in this weapon.

Robin Jeffrey (*Cell Phone Nation*.2013) explains how intermediaries are eliminated with the penetration of mobile phones in the fishing context of Kerala state. The cell phone meant access to the market, more information about prices, new customers for tens of millions of Indian farmers and fishermen and unnecessary middle men.

#### **4.3.5. Knowledge democratization and diversity of voices:**

Knowledge is power. One who has power controlled the society from ancient period onwards (ref. Castells. *TED talk*.2010.). Printing press was one of the earliest steps towards democratization of knowledge. With the technological advancements new knowledge sources such as Wikipedia emerged and user generated content and editing facility made it more and more democratic. Today millions of informative materials are generated in the form of photos, videos, comments, chats, blogs, discussions, debates, tweets, posts etc. Thus knowledge can never be treated as a monopoly of state or any religion as that of the middle ages. Technological development made new media tools cheaper and accessible for the ordinary man and this trend of knowledge sharing would increase. Information flow will definitely improve with the smart mobile phones. Clay Shirky demonstrates the example of earth quakes in different parts of the world. He states that before BBC or CNN reported these events, the incidents were reported, uploaded, transmitted as it was happening (Clay Shirky.2009).

Furthermore, this democratic culture of knowledge sharing helps to convey and raise variety of voices which is an essential element in a democratic society. Often in many non- democratic countries what they wanted to suppress was this voice. The great 'fire wall of China' is an example of this. The political background of this fire wall or the Golden Shield Project is considered to be one of Deng Xiaoping's sayings in the early 1980s: "*If you open the window for fresh air, you have to expect some flies to blow in*".

#### **4.3.6. Paradigm shifts in media sector**

**4.3.6.1. Cross media content:** Since a diverse array of content is now being accessed through the same devices in networked era, media organizations have introduced cross media content. For example, news organizations no longer simply provide just print or audiovisual content but are portals that make material available in forms such as text, video, and podcasts as well as providing links to other relevant resources, online access to their archives, and opportunities for users to comment on the story or provide links to relevant material.( ..... )

**4.3.6.2. Digital score card monitoring:** The Christian Science Monitor in Boston abandoned its daily print edition in 2009 and now operates as a web-first newsroom and weekly print magazine. The Monitor's metamorphosis was one of the earlier and more radical digital-first experiments among traditional news outlets, so its successes and missteps are especially valuable for those that may be contemplating a similar move (Groves and Brown-Smith 2011, 2013; Jake Batsell, 2000).

TV channels deploys audience engagement strategies by observing social media score card. That is they observe the web traffic trend by analyzing Facebook post, Tweets and prioritize news or discard news. The CNN Belief Blog, run out of the network's Washington bureau, drew two million page views and thousands of comments in July 2012 by asking its readers a simple provocative question in the aftermath of the Colorado movie theater shootings: "Where was God in Aurora?" (Jake Batsell.....).

Al Jazeera also experimented this during the Arab uprising by opening special desks in the Television news room, to monitor the abundant live news flow from the smart devices of the people of protests from the Tahrir square and surroundings (Tine Ustad.2014).

#### **4.3.6.3. Digital first, print last:**

'Newsroom 3.0' strategies are reshaping the entire concept of news gathering and construction. Man in the street interview paved way for virtual interviews. 'The Daily Post' in Llandudno Junction, Wales, reorganized its editorial workflow in late 2012 around a permanent live blog that is continuously updated with what editors call "snackable" nuggets of breaking news, weather, and traffic (Jake Batsell).

Many traditional newspapers are having the dictum of 'digital first, print last' and they change the newsroom as open news room. 'Digital First Media', which reaches more than sixty million Americans across 18 states, started an 'Open Newsroom Project' at Connecticut which includes a cafe, free public wi-fi, workstations for local bloggers and a community classroom and meeting space. It's part of bringing the 'outside in'; building partnership and so it really becomes a voice of the people.

#### **4.3.6.4. The unavoidable alternative media:**

The corporately owned, controlled or governed (BBC, CNN) mainstream media is constantly being challenged by alternative media because of the abundance of news flow. Furthermore, they parallel media is genuine, gives critical opinion of the story, independent of any lobbying or 'manufacturing'. Mostly they are grassroots campaigners which include the opinion of the majority than the elitist groups which are minority. Information and news is a mutual exchange of dialogue and conversation with the active involvement of the audience. Popups in TV channels during news hour showing the Twitter message, WhatsApp etc is an example. They even include citizen journalist for comments and observation.

There are many forms of citizen-produced media today including blogs, vlogs, podcasts, digital storytelling, community radio, participatory video, radio, internet, email, movie theatre, DVD and many other forms. This mode of operation alternates the whole concept of information exchange. As one can capture and publish stories of global impact in words and images, including the results of terrorist attacks, the live devastation caused by tsunamis, floods and earthquakes they are unavoidable part of media input.

#### **4.3.7. The smart phone culture**

Smart phones are cheap and fast penetrating. Networked mobile devices consisting of smart phones, tablets, fablets are instant communicators and reshape the whole concept of information dissemination in the networked world. Mobile phone is hailed as the most powerful tool in the world (Robin Jeffrey.2012).

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

In short, we can state that networked culture is more and more participatory, autonomous, grassroots oriented, many to many, un-intermediated, highly 'glocal', interactive, destroys all hierarchies, and flow freely. Chances are higher for this trend since the media penetration is mounting all expectations and predictions.

### **5. FROM CYBERSPACE TO URBAN SPHERE**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

The participatory and sharing culture of digital network is explored in this section. We mainly focus on the recent Arab protests and related social movements, civic engagements and political campaigning. Referring to these protests, theorists have even pointed to the rise of global "Netwars" (Arquilla & Ronfeldt. 2001) or the emergence of an "electronic fabric of struggle" (Cleaver, Jeffrey S. 1995). We shall analyze some of the important dimensions of this 'participatory netwars'.

#### **5.2. The battle of Seattle:**

One of the earliest kinds of international mobilized networked protest through the internet was the 'battle of Seattle' in 1999. On 30 th November 1999, nearly half lakh people took to the streets to protest against corporate globalization at the World Trade Organization (WTO) meeting in Seattle, Washington (Jeffrey S. Juris. 2007). The protests were reported online with streaming audio and video clips. Around 4 lakh people took part in a virtual sit-in of the WTO Web site. A diverse combination of environmental, labor, economic and justice activists succeeded in shutting down the meetings and preventing another round of trade liberalization talks.

This 'battle of Seattle' became a symbol and a battle cry for a new generation of 'smart activists'. Diverse networks converged here. It fashioned a new model of social protest. These Networks were increasingly associated with grassroots participatory democracy, the free and open circulation of information, collaboration through decentralized coordination, consensus decision making, self-directed networking and horizontal connectedness. It was the "cultural logic of networking" which involved in building horizontal ties among diverse, grass root, autonomous elements (Jeffrey Juris.2007).

The anti- WTO protests were a huge success, and everywhere activists wanted to create the "next battle of Seattle".

#### **5.3. Second battle of Seattle**

Smart activists organized a second mass protest against the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington, DC on April 16, 2000. It went truly global. Kevin Danaher and Roger Burbach (2000) collected the 'Seattle battle' events and articles and published the book titled, '*Globalize This!*', just before the IMF event took place. It created a momentum. During a protest event in April 14 th, Oronto Douglas, the famous Nigerian human right activist addressed the rally and said: " What happened in Seattle, when the people decided to stand up and say no to injustice, no to oppression, the world listened. In the next few days, this must not be allowed to die down..... When you stand up to rubber bullets and batons, and say no, when you stand up in America, you are standing up for the oppressed people who have no voice, for the people in the Third World. When you stand up, you are alive" (Abbie Bakan. 2000).

People protested through email and blogs and mass actions continued to intensify and expand during the subsequent mobilization against the World Bank/IMF in Prague on September 26, 2000, Quebec in 2002, Gothenburg, Barcelona, and the G8 summit in Genoa (Kapoor, D. Choudry. 2010). In G8 summit widespread police violence culminated in the death of 23-year-old Italian activist Carlo Giuliani. Over 400 protesters were injured during the clashes. A brutal night-time raid occurred on the Independent Media Center. People instantly communicated thorough blogs and mails. Mass marches and rallies on the following day brought 3, 50,000 protesters onto the streets of Genoa, and hundreds of thousands more around Italy (Jeffrey S. Juris. 2008). Unintimidated, autonomous network played a key role in these demonstrations.

#### **5.4. The pager revolution**

The anti-Estrada movement in the Philippines in 2001 was termed to be the "pager revolution". "Wear black to mourn the death of democracy" were among the million messages transmitted by protesters (Gerald F. Davis, et al.

2005). 7 lakhs demonstrators marched the street and at last the Supreme Court declared that the “people have spoken”. Thus Estrada surrendered power.

During the dictatorship of President Marcos too, there was a revolution in Philippines which was later termed as the ‘electronic revolution’ on behalf of the excessive use of electronic media (David Briston.1988). Studies reveal that it is the SMS capital of the world in spite of its poor economy. Thus there is no wonder to proclaim the revolutions as ‘pager revolutions’ or “people’s power revolution” (Maria Cecelia. 2004).

### **5.5. Moldova's Twitter revolution**

The massive protests coordinated by text message, Facebook, and Twitter broke in Moldova in 2009 and the Communist Party lost power. It all started in a Chisinau cafe, when Natalia Morar, a journalist and a few decided to hold a peaceful protest against the Communist victory in what they claimed that the elections, which saw the governing Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) win a majority of seats, were fraudulent. It just happened through Twitter, the blogosphere, the internet, SMS and all. They brainstormed for 15 minutes, and decided to make a flash mob or an internet- organized spontaneous public gathering. In a couple of hours 15,000 people came out into the street (Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, Igor Munteanu. 2009). Protests continued and party lost its power in front of people’s power.

### **5.6. Series of Twitter revolutions**

There are a series of revolutions and protests which are accelerated by social networking sites and especially Twitter in recent years (Ricardo Buettner & Katharina Buettner.2016).. Compared to other social media platforms, it offers 140 character messages and following-follower network. 2007 Wikileaks (#Wikileaks), 2009 Moldova (#pman),2011 Egypt (#Tahrir), 2011 US occupy movement ( #occupy wall street), 2013 Turkey ( #occupy gezi) are some of the examples of these revolutions (Richardo Buettner.2009.p.3).

### **5.7. The Jasmine revolution**

The Tunisian Revolution or the Jasmine Revolution (named after Tunisia's national flower) began on 18 th December 2010, the day after the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi. This 27 year old street vendor was self-sacrificed in hopelessness and to protest his ill- treatment at the hands of a women police officer in public. Demonstrations broke out in his rural hometown was followed in other areas of the country. When protests reached the capital, Tunis, the government responded with brutality, arresting demonstrators and activists consisting of intellectuals, lawyers and teachers, and shutting down the Internet. All these worsened the situation. Intensive campaign of civil resistance continued through new media and 24 years long president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was ousted in January 2011. Precisely speaking, 28 days of ceaseless protest led to the deporting of Presidents 24 years (1987- 2011) of power.

The mediate reasons were corruption, high unemployment, food inflation, lack of political freedoms like freedom of speech. On 28 November 2010, WikiLeaks and five major newspapers started to publish the first 220 of 251,287 leaked documents describing the corruption and repression by the Tunisian regime. Because of all these, there were long lasting resentments and grudge towards the government.

### **5.8. Tweets and Egyptian revolution**

After the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia on 17 December, a man set himself afire on 18 January in front of the Egyptian parliament and five more attempts followed. Egypt was also under corruption, brutality, and state-of-emergency, lack of free elections and freedom of speech, corruption and economic issues including high unemployment, food-price inflation and low wages. The protesters' primary demands were the end of the Mubarak 30 years of regime (1981-2011) and emergency law, freedom, justice, a responsive non-military government.

Opposition groups planned a day of revolt for 25 January (thus locally known as the January 25 Revolution). Twenty-six-year-old BBA graduate, Asmaa Mahfouz was instrumental in sparking the protests. In a video blog posted a week before National Police Day, she urged the Egyptian people to join her on 25 January in Tahrir Square to bring down the Mubarak regime. Her video blogging and social media went viral and urged people not to be afraid. The Facebook group for the event attracted 80,000 people (Alex Nunns and Nadia Idle. 2011).

The young middle class documented on cell phones every stage of their revolution. It went viral. The real-time story of the protest through tweets and blogs attained wide media coverage. Many of the activists were “citizen journalists”. This online shows of the extraordinary events occurring before their eyes gave instant reactions from the world. These provided remarkable snapshots from the heart of the action. Iranian-French sociology professor Farhad Khosrokhavar, state why these revolutions shook the world by establishing with evidences that it was networked by techno savvy youth (Farhad Khosrokhavar. 2012). At last, the Twitter bullets overthrew Mubarak and his 30 year old rule.

### **5.9. Arab revolutions and web war**

As a continuation of these, a revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests took place in the Arab world and its surroundings. The most radical discourse from Arab Spring into the still ongoing civil wars took place in Syria (2011). By the end of February 2012, rulers had been forced from power in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen; civil uprisings and major protests had broken in Bahrain, Syria, Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, and Sudan; Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Palestine.

In all these places blogging and vlogging, tweeting and re-tweeting were new forms of participatory and empowering activity for spreading news, exchanging views, and shaping public opinion. Though the internet penetration in all these areas is very low, networked mobile gadgets played a key role. Another factor was the wide coverage of Al-Jazeera (Farhad. 2012. p.37) which was also a participatory venture in many sense.

Though the government tried to control the social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, they did not succeed as that of censoring and controlling the traditional media. The more government inserted restriction, the more coverage it was invited. An anonymous group of hackers launched “operation Tunisia” and paralyzed all government media mechanisms. Almost one out of 6 had social networking connection in Tunisia and all the fashion- sports blogs of the Arab continent were filed with political news and photos at that time. Studies reveal that Facebook and Twitter mobilized people of all sectors such as the trade union movements; intellectuals and middle aged youth (Farhad. 2012). Thus, it was termed even as a “webwar”. In most cases, Bloggers and citizen journalists went in to the field, camped there, filmed everything through the cell phones and handed over to the TV channels of ‘Al Jazeera’ and ‘Fance 24’

### **5.11. Participatory culture in media**

When we come to media, we can see that these trends of participation existed earlier itself. The first newspaper in the American colonies adopted a participatory approach. Benjamin Harris’ Publick Occurrences was printed on three pages, with the fourth page blank so readers could add their own news before passing it on to someone else (Martin and Hansen.1998). The letter to the editor was the only channel of participation for the reader’s later.

But today a reader is a co-collaborator in the gathering, selection, production and dissemination of news. Reader or audience has the power to change the headlines, front page, and main story. This is evident form the fact that some newspapers prepare their main news after observing the messages of Twitter and Facebook comments and thereby knowing the pulse of the majority.

Thus the concept of beat reporting has totally changed. Digital technology enabled one to create and distribute information based on one’s own observations or opinions. A participatory media culture, scholar Henry Jenkins writes, “Contrasts with older notions of passive media spectatorship. Rather than talking about media producers and consumers occupying separate roles, we might now see them as participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules that none of us fully understands ” (Jenkins. 2006:3). Thus the new rules and formats are citizen blogs, citizen media photographs, citizen stories, collective interviews, chats and comments, views on a story or other online item.

Let us see some examples. In Israel, online users of different websites had various ways to contact the newsroom. At the ‘Ynet’ and ‘Haaretz’ sites, they could send an email message to either the reporter or the newsroom. Ynet website had a similar feature for reader alerts called the “Red Mail” button. This tool proved popular with readers, particularly during major news events, when the newsroom could be bombarded with hundreds of emails. These

messages went directly to editors who decided whether to follow up any story leads and, if so, assigned them to the appropriate reporter. 'Helsingin Sanomat' and 'Kaleva' (Finnish dailies) actively asked for news tips and provided email addresses of individual reporters, as well as the newsroom. 'Het Nieuwsblad' (Belgium) editors could create a separate email address for each local news page on the website, which they said had proved to be a valuable way of receiving tips, photos or videos about specific towns. '20 Minutos' (Spanish), offered a space in its local pages for short news items from citizens, titled "the reader informs", where citizens cover hyper local news. 'Het Belang van Limburg' (Belgian), provided journalistic training to users who volunteered to become local correspondents for the newspaper's website, creating a network of around 80 amateur journalists to contribute citizen news. 'Der Spiegel' (Germany) offered 'Einestages', a site about twentieth-century history that invited users to submit contemporary eyewitness accounts (Jane B. Singer et al. 2007).

### **5.12. Conclusion**

The above mentioned participatory culture, taken mainly from the west and which are mostly realized and succeeded by the digital technology has certain commonalities and specialties which are our premises of discovery. Those factors are discussed in details in the following section.

## **6. TOWARDS A PARADIGM SHIFT**

### **6.1. Introduction**

The reason that inspired 'Time' Magazine to name its' Person of Year 2011 "The Protester," was an acknowledgment to those individuals who made up the revolutionary peoples movements in the Middle East. According to them 'the redefining people power are reshaping global politics' with dissent across the Middle East spreading to Europe and the United States. Likewise, 'You' were chosen (2006) as the Person of the Year as a recognition to the millions of people who anonymously contributed user-generated content to wikis, YouTube, MySpace, Facebook and the multitudes of other websites featuring user contribution. Mobile phone was selected by UN as the most powerful weapon in the world (Robin Jeffrey & Assa Doron. 2013).

All these illustrate how gadgets are empowering and converting citizens powerful and active participants. From the detailed discussions above, certain important elements of this participatory style are evident such as: people oriented constructive actions, network formations, decentralization of power, autonomous mass self-communication, a clear rejection of capitalism and all systems of domination, direct participation, consensus-based decision-making, free and open circulation of information, new way of doing politics, network-based production of alternative media, self-managed communications network that bypasses the corporate media etc (Jeffrey S. Juris). In other words it is evident that, digital environment is profoundly transforming the nature of social movements, communities, politics, media and interpersonal relations (Wellman.2001; Castells.2001).

### **6.2. Major findings, its relevance**

**6.2.1. Hypothesis 1:** *Division of reporter-reader; anchor-viewer; producer-consumer may slowly vanish in the future, since such a division becomes irrelevant in the network culture.*

As observed from the battle of Seattle, Arab uprisings, Twitter revolutions, social media activism, Obama 2.0 and mobile networked movements, it is evident that participatory culture is slowly eradicating reporter-editor; producer-consumer separation. Thus, new breed of citizen journalists, namely 'produsage' popped up in these movements. News were created from the streets by amateur journalists, lively telecasted without tampering and doctoring, millions shared and retweeted it; even if governments tried to block it, biological rebirth of new networked groups happened.

The future significance of this culture is that news desk and news rooms may have no scarcity of stories and items. The only headache may be to sort this overloaded information. Thus, future newspapers and TV Industry may require new staff such as sorters, new media observers etc to monitor digital traffic and plan news accordingly.

**6.2.2. Hypothesis 2:** *Decentralization of power or real democratization is a fast phenomenon in the digital network.*

The examples of Tunisia, Moldova, Occupy Wall Street protest (OWS) and Obama 2.0 really expose the decentralization of power. Peoples' power, peoples' will and peoples' democracy were recurring phrases and themes used in the above mentioned participatory movements.

It is relevant for the future democracy too especially wherever there is corruption, suppression, and emergency etc. ordinary people may easily share, protest and revolt against the atrocities of such government with the new media gadgets. Simply because they are networked round the clock and are not afraid of any establishments!. Historical lesson is that one Bouaziz is enough to blow up the entire revolution and wipe out 21 year old powerful regime!

More importantly, we can witness the practical applications of the network theory of power and resource mobilization theory in all these movements. Without any effort networks are created among peer to peer group and enormous resources are mobilized within no time.

**6.2.3. Hypothesis 3:** *The hegemony of media conglomerates may weaken in the long run by the networked culture.*

The Al- Jezeera model, which we have discussed in detail, is a positive sign that the age of media conglomerates or western hegemony may diminish in the long run. Since news are created by amateur beat reporters and telecasted/post/uploaded instantly, millions can view it, share it, reproduce/retweet it, comment on it. Even if CNNisation- a term connotative of blocking or suppressing news- follows, biological rebirth happens. Thus, there will be multiple sources of news and plurality of voices leading to the natural death of elitist- populist voice. This is the real democratic discourse as envisioned by Hebermas, where people are the power

**6.2.4. Hypothesis 4:** *The government mechanism cannot block and control the flow of digital traffic since they are spontaneous, viral, and leaderless, occupy virtual space and translates this space in to a physical reality.*

In the recent participatory protests, we witnessed that though the government tried to control the social media it was a flop. Conventionally, modes of mass communication were entirely under state control. But it is no longer the case in the digital environment. Current social movements are hybrid in nature. Manuel castells argue that the "cool" factor of the virtual aspect of social movements is the physical occupation of urban space. This is activated by the creation of: community that allows participants to overcome fear and a Habermasian public space for deliberation and sovereign assemblies (Castels. 2013). They start spontaneously from any outrage or atrocity as that of the case in Bouazizi of Tunisia, enter to the blogosphere, occupy virtual space and create a social change.

### **6.3. Research gaps**

The detailed literature review of the political movements and new media oriented political campaigning revealed new gaps in the literature such as: the real changes happening in the Indian media sector with regard to the collection, assembling, production and dissemination of news in the new media era, how new media is transforming Indian Television sector by the user generated content, the e -political campaigning of Indian media etc.

### **6.4. Suggestions for Further Research**

6.4.1. A detailed and separate study of different sectors which are influenced by the digital environment is advisable such as changes in e- commerce, education sector, newspaper- television industry, mobile banking and so on.

6.4.2. Digital ecology and networked culture often disconnects people by promoting virtual presence and lacking physical presence in the modern world. Thus human beings lose the touch and warmth of real life and everything becomes motorized and machinelike.

6.4.3. The same networked culture is often used for destructive purpose such as terrorism, pornography etc which are major concern of the academia.

6.4.4. Internet or computer addictions are important area of study. In fact, every fourth child is addicted to the Internet (psychguides.com). Information overload leads to decreased productivity at work and fewer interactions with family members, compulsions prompts excessive time spent in online activities, cybersex addiction and cyber-relationship addiction that destroys real-life relationships etc are major divergent areas in the digital environment.

6.4.5. We need to cultivate a culture of new media literacy which could be a part of the curriculum too, since the main beneficiaries of this culture are future generation.

6.4.6. The theoretical background of the research, namely theory of displacement etc can be verified with the media practices today which are self-evident in itself. The new media usage is increasing day by day irrespective of digital divide.

### 6.5. Conclusion

Wael Ghonims' famous manifestation, "if we want to liberate a society just give the citizen the Internet" (Cooper. 2011) and Shirky's techno- deterministic equation: social media = more democracy = more freedom (Shirky.2001) are remarkable concluding comments of this research. It will bring Plurality of voices and empowered-networked-generation may overthrow the media baron's monopoly and 'CNNisation' mania. Media theorist's observation bounce a hope in this research again and again: social media are long term tools that can strengthen civil society and the public sphere (Shirky.2011; Castells.2012). Thus, participatory culture through the networks carries and transports the dream of hope and justice to humanity.

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## NOTES

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- i. **Salam Pax:** One of the most famous blogger in the world; this 29-year-old architect posted blogs during and after the 2003 invasion of Iraq under the title 'where is the read'.
- ii. **Malala Yusuf Sai:** Pakistani schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai first came to public attention in 2009 when she wrote a BBC diary about life under the Taliban. Malala was 11 when she began writing a diary for BBC Urdu. <http://world.time.com/2012/10/23/pakistani-heroine-how-malala-yousafzai-emerged-from-anonymity/>. She won Nobel prize for peace in 2014.
- iii. **Fara Baker:** This 16 year old girl from gaza is known as the – 'The Voice Of Gaza' Or 'The New Ann Frank'. Her tweets of gaza war made her famous with lakhs of followers <http://freegreenbee.blogspot.in/2014/08/fara-baker-voice-of-gaza-new-ann-frank.html>;
- iv. **Edward Snowden:** Edward Joseph Snowden is a famous whistle blower. This computer professional, who was a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) employee, copied classified information from the United States National Security Agency (NSA) in 2013. The information revealed numerous global surveillance programs, many run by the NSA which later became a great threat to US. Refer: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward\\_Snowden](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Snowden).
- v. **Julian Assange:** Julian Paul Assange is an Australian computer programmer and editor-in-chief of WikiLeaks (2006), who hacked and cables published lakhs of secret information regarding US atrocity. Ref: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian\\_Assange](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian_Assange)) etc.
- vi. **Mohamed Bouazizi:** Tunisian street vendor who set himself on fire (17 Dec. 2010) in protest of the confiscation of his merchandises and the harassment that he reported from a women police officer; this self-immolation was the immediate cause of Tunisian revolution.
- vii. **Natalai Morar:** Moldovan investigative journalist for the Russian magazine New Times; the protest she organized in front of the Parliament of Moldova using social-networking tools invited great attention and gradually led to the fall of communist ministry.
- viii. **Kahlid Said:** Murdered by police in Egypt in June 2010, has become a symbol of the Mubarak regime's brutality and this led to the Egyptian revolution. 'We are all Khalid Said' became a Facebook tag which triggered the protest.
- ix. **Pied Piper syndrome:** Refers to a fairy tale where a stranger comes to a village and plays his piper and hypnotizes all the rats in the village with his tune. They follow him where he goes and he get's rid of the rats. The villagers don't want to pay him for this task so he does the same thing with all their children. Likewise, when

someone has a large population enchanted and under their spell, and the population follows this individual with no conscious, Pied Piper Syndrome would be activated.

x. **Whistleblower:** A person who exposes any kind of information or activity that is deemed illegal, unethical, or not correct within an organization that is either private or public. It became prominent after the Global whistleblowing service WikiLeaks, Bradley Manning etc

xi. **Al Jazeeraization:** A term used in media studies to describe the impact of the Al Jazeera Media Network on the politics of the Arab world. It tells us the impact of new media and media sources on global politics, namely, reducing the government and mainstream media monopoly on information and empowering groups which previously lacked a global voice. Refer: Tine Ustad (2014). *Al Jazeera and global media landscape*, London. Routledge.

xii. **CNNisation:** Refers to the Americanization of news flow and global media hegemony which was often criticized by other nations.