Literature, Culture and Media
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Lecture – 40
Postmodern Media II and Formation of Public Opinion

Dear friends, in this module we would look at the postmodern media and particularly what we know as the social media today. We have discussed in the previous module, how in the postmodern media this itself has become the new reality. The difference between reality and its representation through media does not exist anymore and the current civilization or culture is dominated by a state of simulacrum where there is no absolute truth and it is only that the alternative narratives exist.

Baudrillard has given the term surface reality to this condition in which pure reality has been replaced by hyperreality. We have also seen how gradually we are moving beyond this idea of global village towards a situation in which the latest developments like artificial intelligence et cetera of technology would further be made stronger with a combination of the market forces and altogether a new type of a media and a new type of world culture would be made.

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- Postmodern media itself has become the new reality.
- Difference between reality and its depiction in media does not exist and we live in a state of simulacrum where there is no absolute truth, only competing narratives
- Baudrillard: surface reality, as pure reality is replaced by hyperreality
- Global economic shifts, internet revolutions, AI, corporate downsizing, and internet culture and media are restructuring the global culture
- Social Media
- Formation of public opinion

The social media has already started to give us certain glimpses of it and in this module, we would see how and to what extent it can forge and mould the public opinion.

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Social media as a paradigm of postmodern media

- Completely deconstructs the traditional channels of media and human communication.
- Postmodernism: construction or assemblage of truths or narratives from different sources
- By its very nature, social media is postmodernist because it exemplifies the modern spread of (mis)information.
- Stripping communication down to its barest skeletal identity
- All types of announcements, stories, personal narratives, gossip, statements, revelations or inane comments have the potential to dominate newsfeed

Social media is understood as a paradigm of postmodern media. It completely deconstructs the traditional channels of media and the way human beings used to communicate or the way human beings used to trust a particular source of media information. In the postmodern era, we have seen that there is a construction or assemblages of truth or narratives from different sources. And therefore by it is very nature social media is a postmodernist media as it exemplifies the modern spread of information or misinformation or the simultaneous existence of the two. It has stripped the communication down to its barest skeletal identity and its shape is very different from what it used to be about a century back.

In today's world we find that on social media platforms all types of announcements, stories, personal narratives, gossips, statements, revelations or even inane comments may have the potential to dominate newsfeed and come across as authentic representations of something which does not even exist.

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- Complete democratization of media through social media—both liberating and destructive
- Availability of everything online—requires user discretion
- Collapse of categories of high/low culture; important/trivial; refined/popular
- Paparazzi culture—rise of the internet, social media
- Fake news and propaganda to foment social and political unrest
- The current culture of whatsapp forwards or memes which are difficult to trace to their origin—often present half-cooked statements as facts.

So, there is a complete democratization of media through social media. It can be taken up as a liberating experience and at the same time as a destructive element. There is an availability of all information online and this plethora of information require self-discipline and discretion on the part of the viewer.

At the same time, we find that the boundaries between the high and the low culture what is important and what is not and what is trivial and at the same time what could be understood as a refined or not so refined or popular have become absolutely blurred. So, in the absence of this boundaries too we find that the person has to be discreet. Simultaneously we find that aspects of yellow journalism have developed into a paparazzi culture and it has been strengthened by the rise of the internet and social media. At the same time, we find that today the fake news and propaganda maybe very easily to ferment social and political unrest or form a particular type of an opinion. In today's culture where media is being more and more dominated by things like WhatsApp forwards or formation and passing on of memes where it is difficult even to trace the origin. Sometimes half cooked statements or absolute lies can be pirated as facts.

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- Social media embraces contradiction, ambiguity, diversity, interconnectedness and the fusion of the masses, all of which are key principles of postmodern thought (McCandless, D. 2009).
- Creates new forms of human communication—virtual chatrooms, online communities based on shared interests, political ideologies, social and cultural markers.
- Distinction between the producers and consumers of media collapses.
- Modern social networking sites like Facebook, YouTube, Reddit etc—perfect depiction of postmodern concepts
- Deconstruct traditional forms of human interaction and communication—culture of 'facebook' friends and insta followers

Social media embraces therefore, as McCandless has remarked, contradiction, ambiguity, diversity, interconnectedness as well as the fusion of the masses and these are also the key principles of the postmodern thought. We find that the social media has created newer forms of communication. We have virtual chat rooms, online communities, which are based on shared interest and these share interest may really become very various. For example, there may be similar political ideologies social and cultural markers et cetera. And on the basis of these platforms we can also easily say that the distinction between the producers and the consumers of media has collapsed now. In modern social networking sites, we find that particularly sites like Facebook, YouTube, Reddit etc., there is a perfect idolization of postmodern concepts also.

They deconstruct the traditional forms of human interaction and communication as well as community formation. So now what we have is a culture of friends online, the Facebook friends for examples, our followers on sites like Instagram et cetera. So the way we find entertainment had already been changed in the beginning of the 20th century. Now we find that media has also changed the way we forge our relationships at a personal level.

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- Social networks dismantle how we create and consume news and information, combines with business/consumerism—facebook algorithms cater news according to the beliefs of the individual user
- Confirm status-quo in strange ways
- Social networks given way to a collective trans-critical and the meta-analysis of our existence.
- Allow individuals to fashion new identities virtually through pictures, posts, newsfeed.
- A platform for ordinary people to voice their opinions on important matters
- Problem of trolling, threats, abuse

So today we find that the social media, the social networks have dismantled how we create and consume news and information and in a very significant way we find that the passage of information has been tied with business activities and the promotion of consumerist behaviour. Earlier whereas media was limited to advertisements through various forms we find that now Facebook algorithms cater news according to the beliefs of the individual users.

And here in we run into a danger because when Facebook algorithms are impersonally providing us a confirmation of existing beliefs, our status-quo may also be confirmed in a strange ways. So, the possibilities of change which were opened through the advent of this technology may also be killed in the very beginning.

So social networks have given way to a collective trans-critical and the meta-analysis of our existence which also allows individuals to fashion new and different identities virtually through pictures, posts and news feeds et cetera, which are absolutely in contradiction with their actual identities. At the same time, we find that it provides a platform to the ordinary people to voice their opinions on all those matters, which are important to them.

At the same time, we find that the problems of persecution have risen like trolling, online threats, the abuse of threats, which may sometimes be translated into the real life experiences too.

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- New media has created digital platforms in which it is possible to shape a secondary virtual identity online (Dick, 2013).
- Highly advanced technologies which allow one to experience alternative simulated realities--Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR)--creates unique environments in which it is possible to fool the senses while submerged in a simulated space (Anthony, 2017).
- Evolution of computer science and information processing systems offer new possibilities for media
- Problem areas: cause dissociation between the real and the unreal. Films, video shows and online gaming are the first to capitalize on these trends.

So the social networking sites at the new media is full of newer opportunities as well as full of different new threats. It has created digital platforms in which it is possible to shape a secondary virtual identity and highly advanced technologies also allow us to experience alternative simulated realities through virtual reality and augmented reality we find that unique environments may be created in which it is possible to fool our senses while being submerged in a simulated space.

So, evolution of computer science and the way information processing systems are developed have offered newer possibilities for media. Media has always been aligned with technological advancements as we have seen, but now we find that a different set of problem areas is also emerging. Particularly the problem area lies in the fact that contemporary media can cause a complete dissociation between the real and the unreal.

And as we can see films, different types of video games and video programs and particularly online gaming sites are the first to capitalise on these cultural prints.

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HBO's Westworld: A Postmodern media text

- A 2016 science-fiction series based on Michael Crichton's 1973 film of the same name
- Futuristic society—Advanced AI, VR
- An amusement park with humanoid Androids called 'hosts' who are indistinguishable from the human 'guests' who visit the park/an alternative reality in which they can live out their fantasies
- Non linear space-time: loops are central to the narrative—the hosts lack consciousness of their status as androids in a simulated reality; they are stuck in infinite repeatable loops

It is interesting to quote a 2016 science fiction series which is based on a film made by Michael Crichton in 1973 with the same name that is *Westworld*. It presents a futuristic society which has an advanced artificial intelligence and a particular projection of virtual reality and how this virtual reality co-exists with actual reality being played and enacted and experienced by actual human beings.

So it projects in amusement park with humanoid androids who are given the name of hosts, who are virtually indistinguishable from the human guests who visit the park for alternative reality or space in which they can give vent to their fantasies. In this particular series we find that the treatment of space and time is absolute in nonlinear, the loops are central to the narrative, at the same time the hosts lack consciousness of their status as androids in a simulated reality, they are stuck in infinite repeatable loops.

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- Pastiche: references to various genres—Western, Adventure, Quest narratives, romance, war
- The park is an imitation and simulation of the wild west
- Rules: Hosts exist for the sole pleasure of the guests, they are programmed not to kill or fatally harm/turn on the guests, programmed with their origin stories which forms the basis of their looped existence
- Raises questions about the nature of humanity in technologically advanced societies; questions of identity, freedom, consciousness, free will etc.

It has also used pastiche and references to various genres and the park can be considered as an imitation as well as a simulation of the wild west. There are certain rules also which are inbuilt in the program, the way we are expected to understand it. For example, the hosts, the androids, exist for the sole pleasure of the guests and they are programmed not to kill or fatally harm any guest and they are also programed with their origin stories which form the basis of their loop existence.

This treatment within a particular program also raises questions about the nature of humanity, the future of humanity in a society which is highly advanced technologically, what do we understand by human identity, what do we understand by freedom Consciousness and free will in a context of those technological advancements which are a part of our artificial intelligence and virtual reality in today's world.

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- The narrative follows multiple storylines and constantly moves backwards and forwards—merges events which happen in different chronological time periods
- Themes: Consequences of rapid development of technologies on human psychology and identity; illusion of reality; the inseparability of truth and fiction; simulated reality; lack of morality; sexual and physical violence and subjugation of embodied AI; responsibility and ethics; question of rights of AI
- State of hyperreality in highly advanced societies
- Experience of hyperreality on people's psychological health
- Confusion and perplexity that individuals deal with in hyperreal societies

The narrative of this program follows multiple story lines and constantly moves back and forth merging events which had happen in different chronological time periods. The themes also make us conscious of various issues for example, what would be the consequences of rapid technological development on the psyche of the human, how would we perceive identity when we have to coexist with almost human looking robots, the inseparability of truth and fiction what would be the situation and definition of morality, what type of understanding we would have of sexual and physical violence and subjugation of embodied artificial intelligence, do we include morality in our behaviour with these embodied artificial intelligence specimen. How do we look at the questions of responsibility and ethics.

So this is a state of hyperreality in a highly advanced society and then it also helps us to understand what would be the impact of hyperreality on the psychological wellbeing of human being, would they be perplexed, would they be confused when they have to deal with the hyperreal societies or would they be able to take these hyperreal societies in a straight.

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Other Examples

- *The Matrix*
- *Blade Runner*
- *Pulp Fiction*
- *Fight Club*
- Films of Michael Winterbottom, the Coen brothers, and Wong Kar-wai
- Postmodern TV such as *Big Brother; The Wire; Black Mirror, Altered Carbon*
- *Grand Theft Auto* as a postmodern video game
- *Second Life*--ultimate hyperreal media experience

We can look at certain other examples also, for example we have *The Matrix*, *Blade Runner, Pulp Fiction, Fight Club*, Films of Michael Winterbottom, by the Coen brothers, by Wong Kar-wai. We also have postmodern TV serials like *Big Brother, The Wire, Black Mirror, Altered Carbon.*

The example of postmodern media and virtual reality, the impact of technological development and the way it has been combined with entertainment, market forces and our very definitions of human beings, we find that certain other games are also important to be mentioned here, particularly *Grand Theft Auto* as a postmodern video game raise a similar type of question. In *Second Life* also we find that ultimate hyperreal media experience is being projected.

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Baudrillard on Media

- Known as the New McLuhan because of his postmodern media theories
- Key aspects: media, simulations and 'cyberblitz' responsible for constituting a new way of experiencing the world; emergence of a new type of society.
- Radically rethinks society and culture in the light of new media and information technology, technological developments, rising consumerism and capitalism.
- According to him, media plays an instrumental role in constituting the postmodern world.
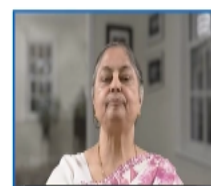
These questions and the projections of these issues through these media also compel us to think of the opinions which Baudrillard had presented in his analysis on contemporary media forms. Baudrillard sometimes known as the new McLuhan because of the way his postmodern media theories have been understood by the people. The key aspects of his theories include a discussion of media simulation and cyberblitz which is responsible for constituting a new way of experiencing the world as well as the emergence of a new type of society in the wake of these media forces.

He radically rethinks society and culture in the light of new media and information technology. He also looks at technological developments, the rising trends of consumerism and capitalism as being deeply associated with market and the formation of culture. And he has rightly commented that media plays an instrument role in constituting the postmodern world. It does not only reflect the postmodern world rather it helps in the constitution of a postmodern world today.

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- Model of media as an omnipotent, omnipresent and autonomous force
- Produces a wide range of effects on individual and society.
- Begins with a criticism of McLuhan only to align himself with McLuhan eventually.

Beginnings of his theories on Media

- "Requiem for the Media" in *Toward a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* (1972).
- Develops a social theory in which media plays a critical role in postmodernity.
- Actually a requiem for a Marxist theory of media.

The model of media, which Baudrillard has presented before us, is omnipotent, omnipresent and an autonomous force. He also suggest that it would have a wide range of effects on individual and society. Though he had started with a criticism of Marshall McLuhan in his later writings we have find that he is aligning himself with most of his predictions.

His theories on media can be found in requiem for the media in his book which was published in 1972 with the title *Toward a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, in

which he has developed social theory to project how media plays a critical role in the construction of postmodernity, which in fact is a requiem for a Marxist theory of media.

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- Critical of Marxian economic reductionism and its inability to take into account the crucial role of signs, language and communications in social theory.
- According to him, mass media of communication 'are anti-mediatory and intransitive.'
  - Communication is reciprocal; mass media prevents response
  - Impossibility of exchange; unilateral
  - "This is the real abstraction of the media. And the system of social control and power is rooted in it" (CPES, pp. 169-170).

He is critical of Marxian economic reductionism and its inability to take into account the crucial role of signs, language and communications and social theory. In his opinion, the media particularly the mass media of communication is anti-mediatory and at the same time intransitive. In his opinion communication is reciprocal, whereas mass media prevents response and there is an impossibility of real exchange and it is unilateral. And thereby this code becomes very famous in which he suggest that "this is the real abstraction of the media and the system of social control and power is rooted in it". So he has presented an idea of media which is omniscient.

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- Expresses technophobia, privileges face-to-face communication over abstract mass media form of communication.
- Ignores that face-to-face communication can also be manipulative and facetious.
- Increasing centrality of media (rise of broadcast media especially TV) seen as 'the fall' into a society of simulations—domination of signs, codes, images, ideas.
- Media as important simulation machines which create an autonomous realm of hyperreality—leads to the elimination of the social.

He has also expressed technophobia if we can call it with this name privileges face to face communication over abstract mass media forms of communication. He also ignores the fact that face to face communication can also be manipulative. He has talked about the increasing centrality of media forms. For example, the rise of broadcast media especially TV and he views that as a fall into a society of simulations where we are dominated by signs, codes, images and ideas. So media becomes an important simulation machine which creates an autonomous realm of hyperreality and ultimately it leads to the elimination of the social.

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- Media is no more than a reflection of reality; doesn't represent reality
- Creation of a new media reality which is more real than the 'real'—reality disappears, only self-referential signs and representations remain.
- "The Implosion of Meaning in the Media"
  – Explosion of signs and images eventually eliminate meaning by "neutralizing and dissolving all content"(Douglass Kellner)
  – Collapse of the distinction between media and reality
  – Saturation of media and information leads to implosion of meaning– only meaningless noise remains, content without meaning

So in his opinion media is not a reflection of reality anymore, it is not a representation of reality rather it is the creation of a reality which is more real than the real and reality as we used to understand it earlier in the modernist time has disappeared what remains are self-referential science and representations. The implosion of meaning in the media presents certain ideas before us.

Particularly the explosion of science and images, which eventually eliminate meaning by neutralizing and dissolving all content. This aspect we would view in forthcoming slides. There is a collapse of the distinction between media and reality which we have already discussed.

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- Media as a 'black hole' of signs which absorbs all content into cybernetic noise
- Eventually follows McLuhan's media theory: "the medium is the message signifies not only the end of the message, but also the end of the medium. There are no longer media in the literal sense of the term -- that is to say, a power mediating between one reality and another, between one state of the real and another -- neither in content nor in form."

He has seen media as a black hole of signs which absorbs all content into cybernetic noise that medium is the message and according to him it signifies not only the end of the message but also the end of the medium. He says "There are no longer media in the literal sense of the term that is to say a power mediating between one reality and another between one state of the real and another, neither in content, nor in form". (Douglass Kellner)

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- "Suggests that there are no media in the sense of institutions and cultural machines mediating between dominant political and economic powers and the population below." (Douglass Kellner)
- Spectacle and entertainment dominates—pandering to the masses to reproduce their tastes, interest, fantasies.
  - Implosion between mass consciousness and media phantasmagoria
  - Media strengthen massification by creating mass audiences and massification of ideas—implosion makes the effects of media unknowable
- Celebrity Culture – their distance from people and people's desire to approximate their life style
- Video Games, where people may forget the distinction between game play and real life.
  - Blue Whale challenge, Kiki challenge

So he suggest that there are no media in the sense of institutions and cultural machines mediating between dominant, political and economic powers at the top and the population who have to look at them from below. So let us say that according to Baudrillard there is this idea of media in which the spectacle and entertainment dominate, they pander to the masses to reproduce their tastes, interest and fantasies instead of continuing with the traditional idea of mediating between an external force and the people below.

So, there is an implosion between mass consciousness and media phantasmagoria, media strengthens massification, by creating mass audiences and massification of ideas and implosion make the effects of media unknowable. The mass media today has also projected a celebrity culture in which the celebrity is distanced from the people and therefore they cannot understand the life and needs of the people. But at the same time there is an intense desire among people to approximate the lifestyle of the celebrity as it is being projected by the media.

Besides promoting a celebrity culture the postmodern social media has also promoted the concept of video games and brought it very close to human being where people may forget the distinction between the game play and the real life. Instances of the games like Blue Whale and Kiki in which the very life of people can be threatened are certain examples of the power of social media and how it can sway the people to act and behave in a particular fashion.

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Formation of Public Opinion by Media

- Most powerful tool for the formation of Public opinion
- Influence is all pervasive
- Postmodern world is characterized by immersion in media forms
- Traditional media (Newspapers, magazines, posters, reports), Electric Media(Films, TV, and Radio) and New media (Internet, Social media, digital media forms)
- Every single person has access to at least one form of mass media
- Formation of opinion is directly tied to ideological institutions—social, cultural, political

So we can say that the media today is a powerful tool for the formation of public opinion and it has an all pervasive influence. The traditional media whether it was in the form of print or electric media the films, TV and radio have been overshadowed by this new mass media with the advent of the internet and other digital forms of media.

Every single person now has access to at least more than one forms of mass media. And in this inundation of different media forms and in these days of easy approaches to media we sometimes overlook the fact that the formation of opinion is ultimately directly tied to ideological institutions. There may be social, cultural or political, but the formation of opinion is always directly linked to these institutions, which are ideological by their very nature.

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Forms opinion through education

- A source of information and education
- Books, journals, posters, brochures, even advertisements and radio shows
- Different sources of learning impact people differently
- Sources determine the following:
    - Objectivity
    - Reliability and credibility
    - Intended effect on the audience
    - Agenda
- What people learn and where they learn it from influences their world-view

An important aspect of social media, which has also been touched upon by Marshall McLuhan is about how the opinion is formed through education and how education has to be imparted in today's day where media has taken different forms. So social media can be a source of information and education, so we find that now there are so many different sources for us to find information from or we can access books, journals, posters, brochures, advertisement, radio shows and so many websites.

So in these different sources which source do we determine depends on one's own subjectivity and the source determines how much objective we become as a person later on, what is the reliability and credibility of our opinion and what is the agenda with which a particular opinion is being presented. Ultimately what we learn and where they learn it from influences our world view.

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- What people learn and where they learn it from influences their thinking and perception of themselves, things and the world at large.
- Shapes their daily choices, attitudes, behavior
- Media forms and their content is inextricably linked to the institutions of social, political and economic control—How do they influence the content?
- Schools, Universities and Institutes of learning are the most powerful ISAs in any society
- Rely on written texts, books, essays, posters, reports to disseminate knowledge

Since it influences our world view, it influences our thought patterns, it influences our self-perception, then it also shapes our daily choices, our attitudes towards other people and towards our own self and it also governs our behaviour. So we have to be aware that different media forms and their content is inextricably linked to the institutions of social, political and economic control and these ideological institutions influence the content of the media in today's worlds.

There was a time when schools and universities and other similar institutions were considered to be the most powerful places for imparting education and those were the places where one was expected to learn. And there was a time when one could rely on written texts and books et cetera for understanding something and also for the dissemination of knowledge.

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- Inclusion and exclusion of texts determines what is disseminated
- Syllabus changes often reflect the status quo. Political intervention in academic decisions may have huge repercussions
- Eg. History of colonialism is taught differently in erstwhile colonies and colonial powers
- The problematic notion of the canon—literary works by socially and politically disadvantaged societies/communities remain underrepresented
- School textbooks often reinforce gender roles and stereotypes

But now we find that the situation has changed completely, what we include and exclude from a text also determines what is disseminated. The syllabus changes often reflect this status quo and political intervention in academic decisions may also have huge repercussions and interesting example is about how the history of colonialism is taught in erstwhile colonial powers.

The problematic notion of the canon is also there in which we find that the literary works of certain countries and societies, which are socially, politically and economically on the weaker side, remain underrepresented at a global level. School textbooks often reinforce stereotypes particularly about gender roles and ethnicities.

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Apart from these nowadays we find that the masses can also learn from history, languages, literature, culture and communities from other sources which include TV programs, documentaries so on and so forth. And these forces particularly of mass media may also be a source of misinformation and misrepresentation and political and economic agenda plays a dominant role in decisions to prepare and broadcast certain types of shows.

We find that there may be an appropriation of historical, cultural and religious events figures in context by certain people in order to generate a particular mindset. We have seen how Biblical enmity was used to reinforce anti-semitic views in the Nazi Germany, the white supremacist in USA had used the imagery of the Ku Klux Klan and the confederacy flags. So the mass media can also be used to reinforce xenophobic ideas, images and symbols as well as for negatively representing refugees or migrants in different parts of the globe.

- Misrepresentation, distortion, caricaturization and ridicule of socially and economically disadvantaged sections
    - Stereotypes about women, LGBT community, Blacks, Hispanic and Asian communities in American productions or Hollywood
    - Whitewashing by Hollywood
    - Romanticization of the American Civil War
    - Lack of women centric roles in Cinema
- Controversial topics or socially relevant subjects are either ignored in mainstream films/TV or they are often diluted

We have also seen how the representations of women and Asian communities are normally presented in a stereotypical manner in American productions on Hollywood. There is romanticization of the American Civil War ignoring the fact of the exploitation of a complete race. At the same time, we find that there is a lack of women centric roles and episodes in cinema and other entertainment channels.

Often we can also see that controversial topics or socially relevant subjects are either ignored in mainstream films or TV or they are often diluted. Social media can act in a very powerful manner to generate awareness about these ideas and at the same time, it can unfortunately be used to generate smear campaign against these issues.

- Thus, constant exposure to certain kind of content, images, symbols and ideas influence and shape how people respond and what they learn about the world
- Media has the power to influence and change public opinion—it's both the boon and bane of media

Boon:
    - Disseminate progressive and liberal ideas
    - Create empathy and sympathetic attitudes to Others (in terms of nationalism, class, caste, gender, race, sexuality)

So constant exposure to certain kind of content, image or symbol particularly influences how we individuals respond to these situations and how and what exactly we learn about the world. So media has a power to influence and change public opinion, it is both the boon and bane of the media. We can say that it has the power to disseminate progressive and liberal ideas, it can create empathy among people and generate sympathetic attitudes to others about issues related with nationalism, class, caste, gender, race and sexuality.

The social media is known as the fourth pillar of our society, but then there are certain aspects which are negatively associated with it.

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- Bane:
- Corporatization of media: Paid news, excessive advertisements, Fanning distorted and incomplete version of truths for political/commercial gains
- Sensationalism, Giving importance to only one particular political worldview: Fox News/CNN dichotomy
- The malaise of fake news
- Polarization of views and unhealthy debates on social media like twitter and Facebook
- Misuse of user's private data for metadata profiling, targeted marketing, political propaganda

We also seen the impact of corporatization on media houses, we look at phenomena known as paid news, excessive advertisements, Fanning distorted and incomplete versions of truth for commercial and political gains also. There is also an effort to sensationalise issues giving importance to a particular political world view, polarisation of views and unhealthy debates on social media like Twitter and Facebook.

As well as the latest instances where the user's private data can be misused and abused either for commercial gains or for metadata profiling targeted marketing political propaganda et cetera without any permission from the users.

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- Lack of internal mechanism's to enforce ethical standards of journalism
- Appropriation of censorship laws to target provocative and progressive content that challenges societal norms or status quo
- Biased reportage; political lobbying; playing the jury in reportage on alleged crimes; playing with constitutional issues; incendiary remarks

So there is a lack of internal mechanism in the social media today which can enforce certain ethical standards of journalism. Appropriation of censorship laws has been there to target provocative and progressive content that challenges societal norms or status quo. We also look at biased reportage, political lobbying, playing the jury in reportage on alleged crimes, playing with constitutional issues creating incendiary remarks to inflame sentiments.

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- Transforms "hot" events like wars, political disorder, calamities into "cool" media events (Baudrillard)—effect of implosion of meaning and information.
- Repeated reproduction creates distance from the reality. Creation of continuous exposure makes audience neutral towards the harsh facts
- Hyperreality – excess of reality. Replication of reality through different mediums makes audience believe that reality or truth of events can be discovered through the reproduction of reality in an 'orgy' of realism that culminates in the devastation of the real
- Hypersimilitude - hypertruth
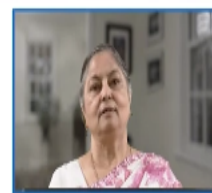
Even if we do not pay too much attention to these negative aspects of mass media today, we still have to accept that the mass media today has the capability to transform hot events in to cool events as Baudrillard has said, hot events like wars, political disorders, calamities et cetera, can be treated as cool media events and this is the effect of implosion of meaning and information.

The repeated reproduction of media images creates a distance from the reality in the minds of the viewer. Creation of continuous exposure make audience ultimately neutral towards the harsh facts because they look at these harsh facts surrounding them all the time. So they develop a sense of immunity and distance towards them. So this is known as hyper reality, that is the excess of reality.

When there is a continuous replication of reality through different mediums, it makes audience believe that reality or truth of events can be discovered through the reproduction of reality in what has been termed as an orgy of realism that ultimately culminates in the devastation of the real. This is also known as hypersimilitude or the hypertruth.

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- Entertainment platforms like Film and TV programs also exercise immense power in shaping public opinion and attitude indirectly.
    - Educate and entertain.
- Media images about women are often detrimental to their physical and mental health by encouraging impossible standards of beauty and desirability.
    - Romantic films and TV shows often reinforce stereotypical gender roles and expectations.
    - Rampant objectification of bodies
    - Gratuitous and sensationalist images of physical and sexual violence in films, TV series and video games
    - The proliferation of porn websites—target male audience, use women as objects of pleasure

The entertainment platforms like films and TV programs also exercise immense power over the psyche of the people in shaping public opinion and attitude in a suggestive and indirect way. They can be used to educate the people to entertain the people, but at the same time unfortunately we find that they can also be abused to create or cement a particular idea among the users.

We look at the media images about women particularly in the developing countries are often detrimental to their physical and mental health as they encourage impossible standards of beauty and desirability. Romantic TV shows and films often reinforce stereotypical gender roles and encourage the similar type of expectations by objectifying the female body. The sensationalist images of physical and sexual violence in films, TV series and videogames also effects the social norms in a negative manner.

At the same time there is also a proliferation of porn websites, which target male audience only and use women only as objects of pleasure.

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- Media replaced symbolic exchange with non-communication where the distancing power of media makes us avoid people-to-people connect
- Traditionally media held a mirror up to the reality
- McLuhan- media was influencing the reality
- Baudrillard - media has replaced the reality
- Reality shows like Big Brother/Big Boss create a myth of reality – produce a dissolution of TV in life and a dissolution of life in TV
- We fill our lives not with experiences, but images of experiences

Media has replaced symbolic exchange with what can be termed as non-communication where the distancing power of media makes us avoid a people to people connect. It is said that traditionally, media held a mirror up to the reality. McLuhan told us how media was used to influence the reality and Baudrillard has made us aware that in today's world of simulacrum media has replaced the reality.

This particular aspect of media replacing the reality is perhaps illustrated in very interesting way by the television reality shows like *Big Brother* or the *Big Boss*, which create a myth of reality. We can say that they produce a dissolution of TV in life and the dissolution of life in TV and ultimately we live in a situation where we fill our lives not with experiences, but images of experiences.

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- Media has no event now, it is only simulacrum
- Viewers are isolated by and within their HD experiences, avoiding direct human connect. Media/television encourages indifference, distance and apathy, "it anaesthetizes the imagination"
- Heavily mediated important world events become examples of non-event: the 1991 Gulf War; Princess Diana's tragic death; 9/11; tsunami in 2004
- Counter-intuitive. Moral distancing in the thrill of seeing on screen spectacle
- Inside the self-referential balloon of media, thousands of deaths and rock concerts have equal value as events have become organized publicity
- No moral purpose

So media has no event to portray now, it is only simulacrum and viewers are isolated by and also within their own HD experiences avoiding direct human connect and this has become a malaise in today's world. Media and television encourage indifference distance and apathy among people. Baudrillard has used a phrase that it 'anesthetizes the imagination'. Viewers are so immersed in their own independent and individual media projections that for them the connections with other human beings becomes undesirable and redundant.

At the same time, we find that certain world events become so heavily mediated that they become examples of non-event and the tragedy of these events passes us by, it does not evoke a sense of moral agony, a moral discomfort among the viewers. So, Baudrillard has confirmed this opinion and elaborated upon this idea by giving certain examples he has particularly talked about the 1991 Gulf War in which people were engrossed not by the death and violence, which was being perpetrated in the streets over people but they were more engrossed with how effective the visualisation is on a particular channel. At the same time the incidents like the tragic death of Princess Diana, the tragic incident of 09/11, the tsunamis in Asia in 2004 have been projected in such a way that they have projected not empathy or a sensitivity among the viewers, but they have been projected only as non-events.

They have been counterintuitive and the thrill of seeing and on screen is spectacle has gripped the imagination of the viewers to such an extent that there has been a moral distancing in their psyche. So, inside our own self-referential balloons of media engrossment, we find that whether it is thousands of deaths or a rock concerts, they have equal value as

events. Because events are not something which has happened, but it is an organised publicity now.

So these are certain aspects of social media which critics have looked at and pointed out. And we find that the discussions of McLuhan and Baudrillard have been able to very effectively sum up the way media can have the power to change our cultural understanding, the way we look at ourselves, view our opinions, frame them and at the same time look at our surrounding world.

Baudrillard has particularly drawn our attention to how the social media projections of these non-events can be counter intuitive. There is an automatic and unconscious moral distancing from the scenario. Baudrillard has drawn our attention to the fact that today's media does not have any moral purpose and he has presented this fact very succinctly in his writings. We are also aware that the days which were presented by McLuhan's prophecy of the global media, the global, world are being left behind and we are moving towards what may at best be defined as an uncharted phenomena, where the latest developments of technology including artificial intelligence would have significant impact on how media is shaped and how ultimately media would shape our culture and our values. Thank you.