# THE COMMUNICATION EPIPHANY NEW MEDIA AND THE REDEMPTION OF THE OTHER

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**Abstract**

*This paper argues that the birth of the mass media dealt a fatal blow to the communication equality that existed in the pre-industrial tradition-bound societies, creating instead a communication inequality that supported and nurtured a power inequality which empowered some and deprived others, thereby creating unbridgeable divides at various levels and in various forms. It points to the somewhat fascist character of the mass media in not just muffling the participation of the other but also in subverting the very semantic connotation of the process of communication, so much so that mass communication has come to be seen as an unidirectional process which could at its best peak to a reactive level. It goes on to argue that the advent of the Internet as the new media came as a hammer-blow on this vice like grip of the mass media on communication in the public domain. Inherently interactive and non-capital intensive, the new media resurrects the semantic connotation of communication by redrawing the other into the process of communication as an equal partner, thereby striking at the communication inequality perpetuated by the mass media for the partisan ends of the ruling elite at national and international levels. It highlights the attempts of the power elite to muzzle the independence of the new media to abort its attempt to democratize communication. It, therefore, calls for the democratic self-governance of the Internet and the sustained engagement of governments and international bodies with the removal of factors that deprive citizens in various countries to communicate on the global cyber green, thereby making communication in the public domain inclusive and participatory.*

Most communication texts begin with an introduction to communication steeped in the spirit and terminology of the transmission school of communication. Most academic programmes begin with an introductory lecture on communication couched in the phraseology of the transmission school of communication[1]. All these introductions to communication are prefixed of course with the standard definition of communication as being a two-way exchange of feelings and thoughts and with the etymological beginnings of the term in the Latin term *communis*[2].

But as the discussion progresses all that gets lost in the vortex of the transmission school and the inference is clear that communication is nothing more than the sending of verbal and non- verbal messages from a source to a recipient across a channel in such a way that there is minimum noise for maximum understanding of the message and a corresponding behavioural change in the recipient of the message. Thus, the neophyte is brought up on an ideology that privileges the transmission school, and in effect, the mass media discourse.

Against this backdrop, this study attempts to analyze how the mass media discourse has subverted the semantic connotation of the word, 'communication' and helped to create a communication inequality that supports and nurtures a power inequality and divide between the privileged and the marginalized in various shapes and forms at the national and international levels[3]. It argues that the quintessentially interactive character of the new media has the potential to resurrect the semantic signification of the word, 'communication' and to restore communication equality which is a necessary pre-requisite for the redemption of the 'other' from the hegemony of the mass media owners, an important step in the direction of the ideal of human unity[4].

To this end, the study has been divided into four sections. The first section undertakes a survey of the genesis of divides in human society from the mystic, not the intellectual, standpoint of the ideal of human unity, the second section traces the role of mass media in supporting and nurturing such divides to the point of subverting the semantics of the word communication itself, the third section maps the ways in which the new media resurrects communication to pave the way for the redemption of the other and the eventual realization of the mystic ideal of human unity, and the fourth sums up the findings.

## SECTION I

### GENESIS OF DIVIDES IN HUMAN SOCIETY

Divides are institutionalized forms of inequalities. Inequalities between man and the rest of the biosphere and between man and man have existed ever since Nature evolved Life out of matter[5]. While the inequalities between man and the other members of the biosphere were institutionalized to satisfy the avaricious urge of

man, these were justified to begin with by a (mis)interpretation of the religious texts (citation needed)[6] that governed human conduct in traditional societies and in later times by Enlightenment historiography that centralized human development at the expense of his environment[7].

The inequalities between man and man got institutionalized as man turned social/political from being a lone and independent hunter-gatherer[8]. Though the unalterable inequalities between man and man existed even then, yet these did not form the basis of an institutionalized discrimination as man at that time lived a simple life of subsistence.[9] The hunter-gatherer bands and the pastoral tribes had limited needs which formed the central focus of their lives. With the advent of the agricultural stage of economy, human settlements initially in the form of villages, and later in the form of towns came up alongside the flood plains of rivers. Each of the settlements was a closely knit collection of people, still leading a relatively simple social and economic life with subsistence/primitive agriculture as their mainstay.

As the members of a settlement led a more or less closed group life, the form of interaction that emerged between them was interpersonal and face to face. The frequency of interaction and years/decades of living together made the village an extended version of the family. Differences of perception/understanding were, therefore, easily mitigated through constant and equal interaction as in a family. The interpersonal face to face interaction between members of the settlement helped to evolve common grounds of understanding between them so that the settlement turned into a community of people communicating between themselves to lead a mutually beneficial life. Thus, the strength of communication lay in its ability to iron out differences between people to weld them into a community[10].

And herein also lay the strength of its semantic signification. The unalterable inequalities were always there, but these mattered little because of the urge of the community to lead a peaceful and harmonious communal life. The village remained a symbol of such a communal life even after industrialization had hit the road of man's social and economic evolution. Not surprisingly, the eighteenth and the nineteenth century British fiction continued to eulogize rural life as one of purity and simplicity. But, as William Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience were not composed in nostalgia of the lost innocence of the prelapsarian world but as a roadmap of the Redemption of Life from the throes of Experience, so was the rural commune not an emblem of lost purity for the alterable inequalities had as yet not reared their heads.

The alterable inequalities related to the social, economic, cultural and technological 'development' of humankind got institutionalized with the birth of the advanced agricultural and industrial societies[11]. Intensive agriculture created surpluses that could feed the urban population engaged in the newly established factories and the new trading class engaged in the distribution of the mass produced goods. Industrialization and modernization precipitated/facilitated large scale mobility puncturing the closed balloon of the agricultural society and scattering its commune members over a large geographical expanse, thereby giving birth to the modern nation states/societies.

The process continues well into the 21st century, with citizens/members of the nation states/societies dispersing over the entire globe, creating glimmers of a new global society. The large scale displacement of people from their traditional habitats and their consequent convergence in various urban centers speckled across the globe has, as one sociologist prefers to say, given rise to the modern gesselschaft societies[12].

Gone is the communion of the gemeinschaft commune members and it is replaced with the atomization of the gesselschaft society members. This marked change in the nature of interpersonal relations between the members of the society paved the way for the foregrounding of the alterable inequalities between man and man. As the saga of human development/civilization further unfolded itself, not only did the alterable inequalities freeze into divides, but the unalterable inequalities too got woven into the meta-narrative of divides between people(s). The divides between people(s) engendered the dialogic discourse of the Self and the Other. In its mild form, this discourse centralized the concerns of one social sub-group for survival and growth, while marginalizing the concerns of the Others. In its virulent form, it

pruned the Others from the very weltanschauung of the dominant social sub-group13.

At the national level, while these divides have manifested themselves in the form of caste, class, linguistic and racial hegemony, at the international level, these have manifested in the pejorative discourse of development and modernization/ westernization and bred technological and colour hegemony. While the discourse of the Self and the Other based on social, economic and technological divides is understandable, what is surprising is the tendency of such discourses to seek their justification in the physical and psychological inequalities between people. Hitler's diabolic attempt to annihilate the Jews and to run over Europe was grounded in his philosophy of the *sonnenkinder*, which sought justification for such a disastrous course of action in the superiority of the Aryan race. The entire colonial discourse was based on the superiority of the Whites over the blacks and the coloured. In recent times, the much publicized concept of the clash of civilizations was also based on this divide between the White and the non-White people(s)14.

The tendency to found social, economic, cultural and technological divides on unalterable inequalities between man and man goes to show that divides are never circumscribed within one category. Furthermore, it shows that all these divides are only adventitious to something much more germinal and primary. This is the divide of consciousness. The Bible traces this divide back in/out of time to the parable of the Fall that threw Adam and Eve from the exalted state of unitive consciousness to the lowly one of divided consciousness of good and evil. The Vedic tradition traces it back to the manifestation of the Transcendent Truth-Consciousness in the dualistic and divided phenomenological consciousness of all shapes and forms in the sensory world. The Veda celebrates the unity of all forms of animate and inanimate existence in the Vedic hymn of '*Aum prithvi shantih, apah shantih, vanaspatayah shantih, antariksh shantih, visvedevah shantih, Aum Shantih Shantih Shantih*'. Here is the seed mantra of communion between the animate and the inanimate universe, the manifest and the 'unmanifest' universe and (wo)man and (wo)man15.

Bereft of such a unitive consciousness, man pits himself against the universe, though to his own peril ultimately, and one (wo)man against another on the bases of the inequalities spoken of so far, alterable or unalterable for each individual sees him(her)self as a different autonomous unit fighting for survival and/or self-aggrandizement. No amount of intellectualization or conceptualization can substitute for the ideal of human unity realized through unitive consciousness. Notwithstanding the plethora of social and economic utopian theories of egalitarianism, inequalities will continue to harden into divides and all systems built on such utopian theories will crumble or collapse like it happened in the wee hours of the French Revolution or in the twilight of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the then USSR. Reform, as Wordsworth with his mystic vision rightly said, must come from within and not from without.

## SECTION II

## MASS MEDIA AND THE GLOBAL DIVIDES

The various transitions in the history of humankind reveal a movement away from individualistic independence to greater and more complex communal/social dependence. Underpinning and sustaining these transitions has been the ability of humankind to evolve the means of mutual and harmonious interaction. But, just as the communalizing/socializing impulse of (wo)man has been clogged with inequalities that have often got transmuted into divides, so has this mutual interaction often been far from harmonious due to the distortions introduced by the nature of the public sphere, or communication space16.

As long as (wo)man lived the quasi-independent life of a hunter-gatherer, there was scarcely any urgent need for mutual interaction. But, as (s)he graduated from that stage to the others, the need for interaction grew as well. Also, the interaction took on a more complex form. What began with mere signs and whistles soon evolved into human language. With the advent of language, interaction took on a verbal form. As communal/social interaction continued to grow in content and complexity, the human language too grew in the richness of its lexical and syntactic opulence and complexity. Notwithstanding the evolution of human language and its later

luxuriance of expression, non-verbal interaction continued to exert a major influence on human relationships. This use of signs, verbal or non-verbal, in human interaction with a view to evolving a common ground of understanding came to be called communication.

But then, it has been greatly limited in this task by the social, cultural and economic circumstances of people in each age and place. So, depending on the level and degree of divides the human community/society created, communication succeeded in welding members of a commune or a society into a monolith, pursuing common goals and interests.

As the simple agricultural stage of human existence was marked by the absence of alterable inequalities that could create social/ economic/ technological or political divides, the human interaction at this stage was characterized by an attempt to find a common ground of understanding between the members of the settlement. In other words, the members of the settlement communicated to form a commune, a group based on common understanding. Apart from the absence of alterable inequalities, the close-ended and compact localization of the commune ensured that the members could engage in seamless interaction with one another just as they did as members of their respective families. The unrestricted interaction between the members of the commune facilitated communication. This helped communication to play a great harmonizing role not just at the interpersonal level but at the communal level too. The public discourse in such communes— often associated with the village green, where the village elders would congregate to discuss the common issues of the commune—was characterized by a communication equality that was underpinned by the power equality between the members. Not surprisingly the community, the commune & communication became complementary to each other.

The advent of the industrial society changed all. With the large scale displacement of the people across their native climes, the frontiers of the community burst at its seams, spilling its contents all over a new terrain, giving birth to the nation-state and a host of urban centers. The new matrix of people's congregation took on the form of the modern society, marked by islands of existence.

Media stepped in to bridge the gulf created by the social impact of industrialization/modernization/ development.

But what a media! Though immensely capable of reaching out to the largest number of people horizontally as well as vertically and thereby connecting a loosely congregated mass of people scattered over the length and breadth of a country that could be as vast as a (sub)continent, it had seeds of distorting the communication equality. By virtue of its capital intensive character, it paved the way for the spawning and consolidation of mammoth media organizations which as the Transmission school of communication rightly pointed out called for pooling and sieving of information by the media house before it could enter the communication/ public space. In other words, the mass media house became the producer and sender of mass media messages to a mass audience passivized to only consume media messages without having any control over the agenda of public discourse. The advent of the mass media, therefore, signaled the death of communication and communication equality. It gave birth to a communication inequality that was very well suited to prop up a power inequality that thrived on divides among people(s)[16].

Mass media supplanted the town hall/ village green as the forum for public debate, discussion and information. The mass media sought to inform, educate and entertain its audiences. With its wide-sweeping reach, it could overcome the barriers of distance to connect the members of the community scattered over the length and breadth of a nation-state and create, thereby, the semblance of cultural cohesion. Along with the developed means of transportation, it became the instrument of building huge nation-states and of sustaining them administratively. Soon, communication that embraced interpersonal and group interaction got back-grounded from the public domain and the mass communication of messages by the mass media got foregrounded to an extent that it appropriated to itself the semantic significance of communication.

The citizens were marginalized to the periphery of the public space and mass media monopolized the communication space. This transformation robbed the process of communication itself of its quintessential character of evolving communion of

thoughts & feelings for the community to think & act as a monolith. Mass communication became a one way traffic starting from the media organization and ending at the public /the consumer as the point of reception.

With the scaling up of the level of operations, the interpersonal discourse of the local communes got discounted as the non-descript mini-narratives of public life, while the mass media discourse, hereafter referred to as mass communication, of the nation states/post-industrial societies got centralized as the meta-narrative of national life. Its implications were momentous. Where earlier communication was a free interaction among citizens/individuals, it now became the handmaid of media organizations. Only those citizens who had the wherewithal to invest in the acquisition and installation of such media could now communicate in the public domain through the mass media. Thus, communication ceased to be a ubiquitous public activity that could shape the destiny of the community; it became a reified/restricted professional activity determined by the editorial, read business, policy of the media house. Mass media house, the Gatekeeper, sieved all those news that ran counter to its interests. In times to come, there emerged a new nexus of power brokers, media included.

As the nation-state was defined by the character of the ruling elite, the mass media served to manufacture narratives justifying its (mis)rule, depending on how much the mass media itself was accommodated by the ruling elite. Where the interests coincided, the two worked in unison to create new discourses, privileging the Self over the Others. In the early stages of the post industrial world order, it created the meta-narrative of the White man's supremacy over the Others, leading to two virulent divides that struck at the roots of human unity: one, Hitler's narrative of Aryan supremacy which wrecked inhuman vengeance on the Jews, reducing them, as one writer has fictionalized, to the status of unseemly mice, and two, the (neo)colonial narrative of Westernization, read development, that enslaved the other peoples of the world and unleashed untold misery for the subject races in the name of colonial governance of otherwise ungovernable savages. Mass media helped to deepen this cleavage between (wo)man and (wo)man and to sustain the discourse of

hegemony of the ruling nations over the subject races, ignoring and subverting the real life mini-narratives of harmony generated by interpersonal interaction between individuals across these divides.

As man happened to control the strings of power, it also meant the perpetuation of a myth of the superiority of man over woman[17]. Consequently, women had to fight for their rights even in the so-called developed West. The superiority of man over woman was legitimized by tracing it conveniently to the role played by Eve in the 'Fall of Man.' It was maintained both by the clergy and the laity that woman was the architect of man's fall and that God had rightly punished her for this devious work by making her conceive in pain. To this day, the Roman Catholic Church denies women the right to be priests, which has of late come in for resistance from women priests belonging to the RC Church. In the Indian tradition, the downgrading of the position of woman can be traced to Manu, the ancient Hindu law-giver who equated the status of woman with that of the low-born Hindus. This again is a gross distortion of the mystic truth contained in the Veda/Tantra which holds out woman as the manifestation of Shakti, Supraconscious Energy and as such the active principle of Creation. Mass media continued with the popularization and perpetuation of this heresy with a view to subsist and sustain the centrality of the all-powerful man. So, to this day the mass media perpetuates the myth of manliness, manhood and male chauvinism when it spotlights attention on men's sporting events while edging out to inside pages/non-prime time news pertaining to women's sporting events.

The contours of mass media support and popularization of human divides at the global level get replicated at the national and sub-national levels too. Mass media sustains and disseminates the discourse of hegemony of the ruling establishment within each nation in the name of national stability and governance. In countries like India where the society is fragmented in a multiple and complex way along/across the fault-lines of caste, class, colour, gender, religion, language and geographical location, the mass media runs the dominant discourse of the sub-national groups that have had a vice-like grip on political power since independence. It mainstreams the ruling

establishment by using a value-loaded terminology defined and created by the dominant sub-groups. In this way it creates a divide between the Self represented by the ruling establishment and the Others represented by the marginalized and deprived sections of the nation. Mass media sustains this divide by ensuring the hegemony of the ruling establishment through the discourse of democracy. This discourse manufactures the consent of the ruled and helps the ruling establishment to cling on to political power[18].

With globalization hitting the national shores, media too has undergone transformation. In the new attention economy, it has become the vehicle of the advertiser and circulation figures/TRPs have become the bottom lines of editorial policies. The highbrow mass media has come so close to the lowbrow mass media that the lines of distinction between the two have almost evaporated. The 'vulgarisation' of mass media in pursuit of higher circulation figures/TRPs has further had a deleterious effect on the coverage of issues that demand attention from the point of view of addressing the national divides. The marginalization of issues confronting national unity and the mainstreaming of the trivia and sensational divides has further helped the ruling elite to tighten its hold on the reins of power. What is true for India holds more or less true for other emerging economies of South Asia, East Asia, Africa and Latin America where mass media has either stifled dissent or privileged the discourse of the Self over that of the Others.

Thus, in stark contrast with communication which sought to evolve common grounds of understanding among people(s) of different capabilities and cultures and social sub-groups, mass communication, has served to exacerbate differences, both alterable and unalterable, into divides that go to sustaining the hegemony of the Self over the Others at the national and international levels, prompting civil society agencies to root for the citizens' right to communicate as opposed to the right of mass media to communicate.

The discourse of mass media and/or mass communication has been so powerful that communication has come to acquire the semantic connotation of mass communication. By defining communication as the transmission of messages from the sender to the receiver with the maximum possible fidelity, the transmission school defined the process in terms that were appropriate to mass communication undertaken by the mass media. Even when the Semiotic school attempted to correct this fallacy, the mass media discourse grudgingly conceded it as one possible alternative way of communication, thereby retaining all the while its claim to being considered as communication and not as a corruption of the original term. This intellectual heresy diverted attention from the death of communication wrought by the factory-model of mass communication and its role in subverting communication equality with a view to perpetuating and widening divides that underpin the power inequality in the industrial and post-industrial society.

Thus, the advent of mass media and its attendant phenomenon of mass communication not only exacerbated the divides in the society but also turned communication upside down. It usurped the right of the citizen to communicate in the public domain and handed over the right, read power, to communicate to either the government or corporate houses that got to control the mass media. The power equality that characterized communication turned into a power inequality in which the mass media owner monopolized the right to communicate as the 'sender' of mass media messages and the citizen was passivised as a mere recipient of those messages; the maximum extent to which (s)he could make his/her presence felt in the process of communication was to give feedback. The content of public discourse got restricted to the agenda that the mass media organization decided, keeping in mind its editorial and business policy. The communication inequality, therefore, supported and perpetuated a power inequality that kept the human society divided.

## SECTION III

## NEW MEDIA AND THE COMMUNICATION EPIPHANY

Nature does not like imbalances. As if to correct the communication imbalance between the Self and the Others at the (sub)national and international levels, the mass media scene was visited by a new

communication technology that had the potential of subverting the power and communication inequality inbuilt in mass communication and of resurrecting communication. It was the new media. Variously referred to as web media, new information and communication technology and online media, it is a communication technology that can claim to be a total media as it can synthesize all the communication technologies evolved till then. In other words, it can play the radio and web stream/cast the television and display the newspaper. What's more and what has particularly escaped the attention of many has been its ability to break the barrier of mass media technologies by enabling and facilitating interpersonal communication much better than even the telephone as interactive chats on the net can be face to face too through the use of web cams. What's even more mind boggling, it can perform the mass and the interpersonal communication function simultaneously. In other words, it seeks to blow away all the previously held notions and paradigms of mass communication. It is indeed a hurricane that seeks to uproot the entrenched communication and power inequalities of the mass media and to resurrect communication and power equality of the bygone era of agricultural communities, though in a different form.

While communication in the agricultural communities occurred in the geographical space, the communication of the information societies has started taking place in virtual space/cyberspace. The village green of those communities has got supplanted with the global cyber green of the post-modern societies. While the village green could not absorb the destabilizing impact of the industrial society, the cyber green has the ability to overcome the distortions of the mass media space by opening up the possibility of enabling every citizen to interact freely. Communicating on the cyber green does not require much of an investment like it does in the case of mass media. The possibility has become much more potent with the shift of computer-mediated communication to mobile communication, which can incorporate the PDA into it. With more and still more people accessing the Internet through desktop/laptop/palmtop computers, a large number of citizens, irrespective of their social, economic, cultural and national disabilities, are in a position to communicate on the

cyber green both through the interpersonal and the mass mode at one and the same time.

Some of the New Media applications which have revolutionized communication are given below:

### Virtual Reality Worlds

- *Wiki:* A wiki is an online resource which allows users to add and edit content collectively. Through the use of hypertext, a wiki's collection of web pages can be navigated and edited by anyone.
- *Blogs:* Blog is short for weblog, a form of online journal. Best known services are WordPress and Blogger and Typepad and LiveJournal and Squarespace. A blog can have a single author or several. Most blogs allow readers to post comments in response to an article or post, but some do not. Bloglines is an RSS reader, which is a service that collects updates from your favorite blogs so you can read them in one place.
- *Microblogs:* A cross between instant messaging and blogging, Twitter is a *microblogging* system that allows a user to send a short, 140-character informational updates. Users also can follow the updates of selected friends.
- *Photo Sharing:* The best known online photo sharing site is Flickr.
- *Video Sharing:* An online video sharing site is YouTube owned by Google. Videos are uploaded by users and can be viewed free by others. Users can leave comments on video pages. There also are Video Egg and jumpcut and Google Video and eyespot and vimeo and Sony's Crackle and revver and ourmedia and vSocial and Bright Cove.
- *Data Sharing:* A Web application that allows discovering, reading, organizing and sharing on the Internet of valuable personally-selected data and information is Pageflakes.
- *Social Networks:* A social networking site where users can set up a profile of themselves, create formal connections to people they know, communicate, and share preferences and interests is Facebook. Once restricted to college students, Facebook's fastest-growing demographic is users over 25. Social

Bookmarks: The social-bookmarking site del.icio.us lets you add, categorize and manage social bookmarks for storing, sharing, and discovering web pages. Another bookmarking system is Furl.

· *Tag Clouds:* A cloud of tags is a visual list of weighted keywords on a Web page – usually hyperlinked single words listed alphabetically with their importance shown in font size or color. They can be created at TagCrowd and Tag Cloud Generator and TagCloud Generator and TagCloud.

· *Content Sharing:* An online content sharing site is Digg. It surfaces the best stuff on the Web from news to videos to images to Podcasts as voted on by its users. There are no editors. Users collectively determine the value of content. Once something is submitted, other people see it and vote by going to it.

· *Cloud Computing:* Cloud computing allows access to documents from anywhere and collaboration with co-authors. Examples of companies delivering applications online include Google Apps, Adobe Buzzword word processor and Photoshop Express, Amazon.com Web Services, Salesforce.com, Microsoft Windows Azure, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Oracle, and SAP. Users must trust putting all their personal, family, corporate and strategic data on computers operated by someone else. Of course, they already are doing that with such websites as Facebook, Flickr, or Gmail. Notably, the Free Software Foundation is against the idea of trusting for-profit corporations.

· *Google Tools:* While Google itself is not native to the 21st century, its many *Tools* and *Packs* are: Google Tools and Google Pack for Windows XP or Vista and Google Pack for Macintosh. Dating to the old days of 1998, Google now is the largest search engine on the Web, indexing a large proportion of all pages on the Web. Google handles several hundred million queries each day through its various services. The main function is the well-known Google Search. Google Trends allows users to see underlying numerical data on the popularity of any particular search in Google's vast database of search terms, relative to others. Other Google services include Google Language Tools and Google Toolbar and Google Clock, and numerous others. Wikipedia has a List of Google products and a List of Google tools.

· *Conversion Tools:* There are many useful new conversion and building tools appearing on the Web. For instance, the free Online PDF Converter and Document Creator. Another is VIXY, which offers a free service to convert YouTube videos to QuickTime-playable MP4 files. And Videobox, that converts Flash from most video sites to Quicktime. More free Web Tools including webmaster tools, and tlbox, and W3C HTML Tools.

· *Podcasts:* Long lists of podcasts can be found at Podcasting Station and Podcast Alley and Digital Podcasts and Podcast Central. You can download podcasts from iTunes.

· *iTunes:* The best-known online music store is iTunes, where you can buy music, TV shows, audiobooks and iPod games, buy and rent movies, and download podcasts. Other places to buy music online include Amazon and eBay and Napster and Rhapsody and Wal-Mart, and many others.

· *Writing Communities:* Writing has been around since, maybe, the 4th millennium BC and printing dates back a thousand years, so they definitely are not 21st century natives. However, new technologies are allowing individuals to publish readily, rapidly and repeatedly, thereby creating communities of writers. One of the best known is Lulu. These low-cost, on-demand publishers make it easy to disseminate ideas with the support and feedback of a large online writing community.

· *Digital Scrapbooking:* Also known as digi-scrapping or computer scrapbooking, digital scrapbooking uses a computer and graphics software to create visual layouts to preserve memories. Scrapbookers used to paste photos on paper alongside hand-written journal notes and various small embellishment objects and memorabilia such as stickers, buttons and ribbons. Digital scrapbooking uses digital photos, clip art, and graphic textures as embellishment. Preservation of memories remains the ultimate purpose. Digital scrapbook layouts can be printed for an album, or left as computer files shared via Web pages or

email. Software includes Picaboo and Smilebox and Two Peas in a Bucket and Memory Mixer.

· ***Internet Calling:*** An Internet calling service, Skype is reminiscent of the telephone. It enables two-party audio and video chat and multi-party audioconferencing. Skype can make computer-to-computer calls as well as computer-to-land or mobile phone calls. Yahoo! Voice is an Internet calling service that has the ability to assign a phone number to your computer so that it can be called from land-line and mobile phones; computer-to-computer calls from within Yahoo! Messenger; and computer-to-phone calls.

Obviously, the New Media has removed the communication advantage of the media house and liberated the communication space from the stranglehold of power brokers, who had used it to run their own discourses of power to subjugate the Others. The cyber space is, therefore, at once a democratic space wherein all citizens can express themselves without any communication/power inequality.

There is, however, a caveat here. Though the new communication space of the cyber green is intrinsically poised to correct the communication inequality and to resurrect communication, its surrounding reality is unlike that of the village communes. While the village communities were characterized by the lack of alterable inequalities of social and economic distinction, the modern nation-societies are hotbeds of such inequalities, with unalterable inequalities too at times played up to justify the former. Compounding this state of divides across regions, classes, colours, races and nationalities is the atomization of social life in a modern society that places a premium on individual growth even at the expense of the societal well being. In an environment of entrenched divides, it is not easy for the new media to achieve its inherent potential of leveling the divides and creating a new social order based on human unity and understanding. Not surprisingly, the success of the new media is hinged on the obliteration of the digital divide and the growing attempts of governments and corporate houses to muzzle freedom of expression on the global cyber green.

Furthermore, the new media is only a communication technology. The medium cannot be the message. It can only be a vehicle **19**. The persistence of the social, economic, cultural and racial divides will continue to frustrate the realization of the promise held out by the new media. To enable the new media to fulfill its role as a great leveler and democratizing technology, it is essential that the cyberspace does not become Babel of conflicting self-interests, which an atomized society has foregrounded. If this happens, there is going to be a deepening of divides and emergence of conflicts. In other words, the human society will become a prisoner of its entrenched divides. But to avert this, it is essential that the basic divide be addressed first of all.

As the basic divide is localized in the human psyche, no amount of systemic change can ever undo or iron out the divides that separate one human being from another. For without the transformation of the post-lapsarian divide of consciousness into the palpable and the living ideal of human unity held up by the advaitic truth of Oneness of Creation and the Biblical truth of prelapsarian unity of existence, divides will continue to ebb and rise in one form or another in the human society/environment. So, if the promise held out by the ever-liberating and ever-democratizing new media has to come true, it is essential that human communication be re-anchored in the mystic wisdom of human unity. Therein lies the key to the rooting out of all human divides and the fulfillment of communication in human society.

**SECTION IV**

**CONCLUSION**

The preceding discussion maps the subversion of the semantic connotation of communication and the appropriation of its semantic place by mass communication in an industrial society leading to the privileging of the owners of mass media and their cohorts in the league of the power elite at the expense of the others which include marginalized people(s), thereby creating and sustaining global and local divides. The discussion focuses attention on the role played by the new media in resurrecting communication and redeeming the others from the stranglehold of the mass media on public discourse. At the same time, the paper cautions that the

promise of the new media can easily be miscarried if it is not accompanied simultaneously with the reorientation of the content of communication in the mystic ideal of human unity

## REFERENCES

[1]   (Beck.A,  Bennett.P and Wall.P,  AS Communication Studies-The  Essential  Introduction(second  edition) (2005), Routledge, Oxon and USA)   ("The first school of thought, usually known as the process school, characterises communication as the transmission and reception of messages. The second school of thought, usually known as the semiotic school, conceives of communication as the generation and sharing of meanings.")

[2]   (Rayudu.C.S.(2005),COMMUNICATION,  Himalaya Publishing House, Mumbai, Pg 2.) ("The word communication is derived from a latin word communis, which means common. In its application, it means a common ground of understanding. It is a process of exchange of facts, ideas, opinions and as a means that individuals  or  organisations  share  meaning  and understanding with one another. Communication is a process involving the sorting, selecting and sending of symbols in such a way as to help the listener perceive and recreate in his own mind the meaning contained in the mind of the communicator.")

[3]   This runs counter to the belief generally held that power imbalances distort communication.  (Somasundaran. V(2005)Principles  of  Communication,  Authors Press,New  Delhi,pg  12.)("Communication  is systematically distorted by power imbalances that affect participation and expression")

[4]   (Somasundaran. V(2005)Principles of Communication, Authors  Press,  New  Delhi,pg-8,9)  ("The phenomenological  tradition  conceptualises communication as the experience of self and other in dialogue. Such twentieth- century theorists of dialouge as Martin Buber, Hans- George Gadamer, Emanuel Levinas and Carl Rogers can be broadly identified with this tradition. The problem of communication for phenomenology, as for semiotics, is that of a gap between subjective viewpoints. One can not directly experience another consciousness, and the the potential for inter subjective understanding is thereby limited. The two traditions approach this problem in quite different ways, however")

[5]   According  to  Sri  Aurobindo,  "The  creation  has descended all the degrees of being from the Supermind to Matter and in each degree it has created a world, reign, plane or order proper to that degree. In the creating of the material world there was a plunge of this descending  Consciousness  into  an  apparent Inconscience  and  an  emergence  of  it  out  of  that Inconscience, degree by degree, until it recovers its highest spiritual and supramental summits and manifests their powers here in Matter." (Sri Aurobindo's Letters: The Supramental Evolution (1), Available at the

URL:  http://www.indiadivine.org/articles/239/1/Sri-Aurobindos-Letters-The-Supramental-Evolution-1/Page1.html )

[6]   According  to  Amy  Naylor:  The  nature  of  written Hebrew  makes  it  (The  Holy  Bible)  extremely vulnerable to misinterpretation. If we take a look at ancient texts from a feminist point of view as opposed to a patriarchal one we might be surprised at what we find hidden within the text. Through this reinterpretation and reclaiming of the bible as a text for both men and women we can begin to decide if our "traditional gender roles" are actually what God intended.  ( Sexiuality, Gender Roles and the Bible: A Feminist Approach by Amy Naylor, Women's Studies, 399, 2004 Available at the URL:  http://  www.stolaf.edu/courses/ws399/ws399_ 04/Projects/Naylor_Research/index.html )

[7]   According  to  Sandra  Harding,  "Recent  "gender, environment,  and  sustainable  development"  accounts raise  pointed  questions  about  the  complicity  of Enlightenment philosophies of science with failures of Third  World  development  policies  and  the  current environmental crisis. The strengths of these analyses come from distinctive ways they link androcentric, economistic, and nature-blind aspects of development thinking to "the Enlightenment dream." In doing so they share perspectives with and provide resources for other influential  schools  of  science  studies."  ( Gender, Development, and Post-Enlightenment Philosophies of Science, Hypatia, Vol 13, No. 3 (Summer, 1988), pp. 146-167. Available at the URL: http://www.accessmy library.com/article-1G1-191273924/gender-development-and-post.html)

[8]   Roussea.J.J.,(1754), A Dissertation On the Origin and Foundation of The Inequality of Mankind, Available at the   URL:   (palisade.wordpress.com/2007/02/01/the-inequality-of-man/) ("I conceive that there are two kinds of inequality among the human species; one, which I call natural or physical, because it is established by nature, and consists in a difference of age, health, bodily strength, and the qualities of the mind or of the soul: and another, which may be called moral or political inequality, because it depends on a kind of convention, and is established, or at least authorised by the consent of men. This latter consists of the different privileges, which some men enjoy to the prejudice of others; such as that of being more rich, more honoured, more powerful or even in a position to exact obedience.")

[9]   Ross  Vaughn,  Thoughts  on  the  Evolution  of  Social Inequality: A Paradigmatic Analysis, hosted on October 10,  2009  at  the  URL:  http://integralbuddha.net/ thoughts-on-the-evolution-of-social-inequality-a-paradigmatic-analysis

[10]  Gregory J. Shepherd and Eric W. Rothenbuhler(2001) Communication  and  community.  Chapters  address interpersonal conversation and communal relationships

[11]  Compared  to  hunting  and  gathering  societies,  the surplus available in agricultural societies led to the creation of more inequality in these societies. Woodburn (1982) argued that hunting and gathering societies have

"immediate-return systems" and tend to be egalitarian. In contrast, the aborigines of Australia are examples of the "delayed-return system." Here there is a marked degree of inequality because stored food can be turned into durable and exchangeable goods. This allows the accumulation of wealth and power (Yesner, 1982, Testart, 1982), thereby providing the basis for creating more status distinctions among peoples. http://www.vernonjohns.org/vernjohns/rnagric.html

[12] According to Tomislav Sunic, "Peaceful modern societies which respect the individual evolved from age-old familistic ties. The transition from band-type societies, through clan and tribal organizations, into nation-states was peaceful only when accomplished without disruption of the basic ties which link the individual to the larger society by a sense of a common history, culture and kinship. The sense of "belonging" to a nation by virtue of such shared ties promotes cooperation, altruism and respect for other members. In modern times, traditional ties have been weakened by the rise of mass societies and rapid global communication, factors which bring with them rapid social change and new philosophies which deny the significance of the sense of nationhood, and emphasize individualism and individualistic goals. The cohesion of societies has consequently been threatened, and replaced by multicultural and multi-ethnic societies and the overwhelming sense of lost identity in the mass global society in which Western man, at least, has come to conceive himself as belonging. Sociologically, the first theorist to identify this change was the Arab scholar, Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), who emphasized the tendency for mass urban societies to break down when the social solidarity characteristic of tribal and national societies disappeared. Ibn Khaldun saw dramatically the contrast between the morality of the nationalistic and ethnically unified Berbers of North Africa and the motley collation of peoples who called themselves Arabs under Arabic leadership, but did not possess the unity and sense of identity that had made the relatively small population of true Arabs who had built a widespread and Arabic-speaking Empire. Later it was Ferdinand Tonnies (1855-1936) who introduced this thought to modern sociology. He did so in his theory of gemeinschaft and gesellschaft (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft, 1887). This theory revealed how early tribal or national (gemeinschaft) societies achieved harmonious collaboration and cooperation more or less automatically due to the common culture and sense of common genetic and cultural identity in which all members were raised. This avoided major conflicts concerning basic values since all shared a common set of mores and a common sense of destiny. However, as history progressed, larger multi-ethnic and multi-cultural societies began to develop, and these Tonnies described as being united by gesellschaft ties. These were not united by any common set of values or historical identity, and collaboration was only maintained due to the need to exchange goods and services. In short, their existence came to depend on economic relations, and as a result of the diversity of cultural values, the lack of any "family feeling," and the emphasis on economic exchange and economic wealth, conflict over wealth and basic values was likely to disrupt the harmony of such societies at any time. In political terms, liberalism developed to eulogize the freedom of individuals from claims to national loyalty and support for national destiny, while Marxism grew out of the dissatisfaction felt by those who were less successful in achieving wealth and power, which now came to represent the primary goals of the individuals who were left at the mercy of the modern mass gesellschaft society. Nationalism and any sense of loyalty to the nation as a distinct ethnic, kinship unit came to be anathomized by both liberals and Marxists." Vol. 34, Mankind Quarterly, 04-01-1994, pp 263.Available at the URL: ( http://home.alphalink. com.au/~radnat/debenoist/ alain6.html)

[13] In the words of Stephen Knapp, "As everything is created from the Supreme Creator, then we should certainly have a high regard for everything as the expansion of God's energies. This not only includes all of our fellow men, but all creatures, as well as all aspects of the planet. Violence toward the planet in the form of not caring for the environment, misusing and polluting our natural resources, not managing the land and forests properly, are all forms of disrespect toward God and the blessings that have been given us." ( Stephen Knapp, Environmentalism according to the Vedic View, Available at the URL: http://www.stephen-knapp.com/ environmentalism_according_ to_the_vedic_ view.htm)

[14] According to Thomas Tufte, Analysing global divides in relation to media in everyday life becomes an analysis of experienced mediatized divides related to processes of social inclusion, identity formation and citizenship. It may concern experienced divides in relation to people and nations elsewhere on the globe, but just as likely experienced divides in one's own country or community. In this context, the media are the mediators of lived experience, access-givers to symbolic worlds of entertainment and global news reporting. They also become facilitators of and providers of spaces for public debate and for participation in society. By analysing media and global divides from an everyday perspective, the object of study does not become the technologies per se, but how they facilitate social networking, enhance processes of identity formation, enable access to and participation in public debates and ultimately enhance possibilities for citizens to express themselves and engage in society. Thomas Tufte, Media and the Global Divide: A Bottom-up and Citizen Perspective. Available at the URL: http://www.nordicom.gu.se/common/ publ_pdf/283_tufte

[15] Despite the tremendous changes of the twentieth century, discrimination and violence against women and girls remain firmly rooted in cultures around the world, according to a new report, "Lives Together, Worlds Apart—State of World Population 2000", released on 20 September by the United Nations

Population Fund (UNFPA). The report demonstrates that while many countries have started taking steps to protect women's rights and promote equality, actual progress has been slow. Inequality between men and women persists-Brief Article, UN Chronicle, Fall, 2000. Available at http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1309/is_3_37/ai_70654237/?tag=content;col1

[16] Chomsky argues that the media, especially the large multimedia companies, have one supervening motive apart from profit and that is what he calls the "manufacturing of consent" Essentially, Chomsky argues that the media today are involved in a two pronged process. The first process is to ensure that the top 20 % of the population are satisfied and this is achieved by maintaining their position as policy makers, in control of some rudiments of power. Most of the media are therefore inevitably interested in maintaining the status quo, as is, frequently, the power elite; often the power elite and the media elite are the same group of people. He argues that part of the hegemonic function of media is to keep the remaining 80% of the population happy- a concept called "bread and circuses"- with a diet of celebrity gossip, sport, soap operas and light entertainment. It can therefore be seen that media have vested interests: to maintain the ideological status quo, to cooperate with the govt and to make money. Chomsky argues that this process is a form of control in a democratic society. (Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky as mentioned in the book –Media Studies AS The essential Introduction for AQA 2008 specifications by Philip Rayner and Peter Wall ( third edition) Routledge london and New York )on page no- 168-69.

[17] Author Michael Bugeja tackles this question by taking a broad and interdisciplinary approach, incorporating a number of different viewpoints, including global, ethical, philosophical, corporate, pop cultural, and sociological perspectives. Bugeja analyses the 'interpersonal divide', the void that develops between people when we spend too much time in virtual rather than in real communities, and makes a case for face-to-face communication in a technological world. Michael Bugeja, Interpersonal Divide: The Search for Community in a Technological Age. Available at the URL:http://www.oup.com.au/titles/higher_ed/media.../