

(Wesley): **Modern Means of Communication - A Critical Approach**

Nokia says, "Connecting people." Vodafone says, "Wherever you go, it follows". These are common taglines associated with various mobile communications service providers. The miracle of modern communication has shattered all barriers of distance. People living poles apart, separated by infinitely large distances, are able to communicate effortlessly with each other, almost as next door neighbours. The barrier of time has also been completely nullified. Messages, which would even take up to a year to reach their desired destination, are transferred at the speed of light in the form of bytes, kilobytes and megabytes of information. Did communication not exist before this groundbreaking revolution of Information Technology? Of course it did. Today, however, the idea of communication, soaring like an eagle on the wings of the modern means of communication, has reached dizzying, inconceivable heights; not only enhancing the way we communicate but drastically changing it.

Why we need Communication and how it has evolved

Philosophical studies often state that "Man is a social animal". It implies that man has an innate desire to communicate with others. This is clearly evident in the phenomenal pace at which children pick up languages; the desire to express themselves and communicate with others is what drives them. The means of communication essay a pivotal role of enabling human beings to express themselves. It has evolved over the years like a germinating seed into a full-fledged tree. The earlier means of communication were the verbal messages, letters, paintings, etc. The modern face of communication includes newspapers, mobile phones, internet, television and innumerable such ingenious inventions. The heart of the matter, man's desire to communicate, remains unchanged. However what has evolved is the way in which he expresses himself.

Classification and Advantages of the Modern Means of Communication

There is a popular anecdote which states that the three fastest means of communication are the telephone, television and tell-a-woman. Although there is no officially recognized classification of the modern means of communication, I would like to place them in two categories:

- a) Modern means for Social Communication
- b) Modern means for Media Communication

Social Communication would imply modern means of communication that work on a give-and-take relationship. It is an active form of communication. The Phone, Email, Skype, SMS, Facebook, Twitter are the means of communication that would be pertinent in this category.

The E-mail, SMS and mobile phones ascertain that your near and dear ones are never 'Out-of-Range'. Skype makes sure that you have the pleasure of not only listening to but also seeing your loved ones. Facebook and Twitter make sure that everyone is updated as to what the 'Latest Happenings' in your life are. The good old trusty postman is almost on the verge of extinction! Instantaneous communication is the order of the day. For one to be able to access such ingenious means of communication might imply, burning a huge hole in one's pockets; au contraire, all of the latest gadgets are very affordable and easily accessible to even the common man.

The second category, 'Media Communication' is a more passive form of communication. In today's age the user is bombarded by a barrage of information, which influences the way one thinks, speaks and acts. No sooner has a particular event occurred than will one be able to access every intricate detail of it through the internet, news channels and newspapers. The fantasy world of television, movies and advertisements puts forth a repertoire of ideas and makes sure that one is always entertained. The blog ascertains that each person's opinion counts. Looking in a library for relevant matter pertaining to an idea, is equivalent to looking for a needle in a haystack. A new morn has dawned with the advent of the Google search engine. The vast ocean of knowledge, almost inaccessible once, is now literally at our fingertips.

Disadvantages of Social Communication

"The more we elaborate the means of communication, the less we communicate", says Joseph Priestly. Social communication would ideally imply enabling a person to socialize better, in reality it has had a jaw-dropping adverse effect. Addiction to the internet and mobile phones is rising alarmingly. Innumerable cases can be cited of sleep deprivation, lack of physical activity, the neglect of friends and family, and eventually the ruin of the family. It is not an uncommon sight to see friends or family at a restaurant or any other social gathering much more occupied with their mobile phones. People patronizing these means in excess tend to slowly become more introvert and dislike social gatherings. They begin to prefer socializing on the internet, preferring to run away from reality and live in the virtual world where one can manipulate reality to suit one's own needs and preferences. Before the individual knows it, he is trapped like a fly in the sinister web of a spider. He has locked himself in an impenetrable enclosure, bound in chains and the keys thrown to the bottom of the ocean -- even Houdini would dread this kind of an escape!

Disadvantage of Media Communication

Like the 'Great Dictator' this form of communication has the power to influence, almost to the extent of the hypnotism of a magician. The air we breathe has furtively been impregnated with malicious ideas of hedonism, consumerism, avarice, callousness. The cultural and loose moral values portrayed, influence the youth and a paradigm shift is occurring in which they are being blindly led to the edge of the cliff by aping the western

world. Most people are in reverie, absolutely oblivious to the way 'The Pied Piper', the media, is influencing their lives.

Modern means of Apostolic Communication

"Go and proclaim the Good News to the whole creation" – Mk 16:20. There could not be a better medium to propagate the 'Kingdom of God' than the 'Pandora's Box' of modern communication. However, this double edged sword must be wielded with great discretion and circumspection. St. Ignatius puts forth the principle of 'Tantum Quantum' which means 'In so far as'. It implies that there is no harm in one using modern means for apostolic purposes, so long as, you possess your goods and are not possessed by them. Likewise, The Buddha speaks of always taking the 'Middle Path'.

The wind need not blow in only one direction. Communication need not imply only 'going out' but also 'going in' i.e. 'Communication with God'. The innumerable latest gadgets would not enable one to enter a state of silence and recollection or communicate with God. In the midst of the chaotic situation and bombardment of ideas, the apostle must retreat and get to his roots.

Conclusion

Modern means of communication has the ability to 'Make or Break'. It has enhanced the way we live yet made deep inroads and permeated our being, impacting the way we think, feel and act. "Fools rush in, where angels fear to tread". Prudence in the way we use these marvels is of utmost importance. One must not tie the strings of the musical instrument so tight that it may break - and not so loose that there is no melody at all!

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