

**Literature, Culture and Media**  
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**Lecture – 37**  
**Media and the Electric Age**

Dear participants, welcome to our second module of the 8th week. In this module today, we would be discussing the ideas of Marshall McLuhan about how media is started to affect and ultimately shape our culture. The content of today's module are the discussion of electric age, what are its main features, a summary of main arguments of Marshall McLuhan also what is the difference which electric technology is making to our interest in content and as well as in what the medium actually says.

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Content

- Electric Age: Introduction and Features
- Marshall McLuhan Speaks: The Future of Man in the Electric Age
  - Summary of main arguments
  - What difference is the electric technology making to our interest in content and in what the medium actually says?
  - Impact of New Electric Media
- Global village
- Global village: Problem areas
- Video: McLuhan's Predictions about Technology



We would also discuss the impact on our interpersonal skills and society and culture in the context of new electric media. Later on, we would discuss this idea of the global village, which was initiated and presented by Marshall McLuhan in one of his books. What are the problem areas in the context of this idea of global village, which even Marshall McLuhan was able to foresee and we would find up, with the discussion of a video in which McLuhan predicted about the impact of technology on our contemporary culture.

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- *Understanding Media* (1964): Shift away from the mechanical focus of philosophies of technologies in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Towards more post modern approaches to the questions of the nature and effects of technology
- The means of communication – the medium – dominates the content/message/communicated subject/the very essence of communication
- Identity is constructed through technology
- Machines are of reproduction, rather than of production
- Cyberspace is non-space/virtual world is not real
- Connections among media, technology, market forces, culture and gender have become blurred and porous

McLuhan's major work was published in 1964 in his book with the title *Understanding Media*, we find that there is a shift away from the focus of the philosophies of early 20th century which were basically based on a discussion of the mechanical aspects of industrial development. In McLuhan, we find that there is an approach towards more postmodernist approaches because he has started to talk about the nature of technology as well as the effect of technology in the context of media and our own human culture.

His ideas that it is the means of communication, the medium which are more important than the message or the communicated subject or the very essence of communication was a revolutionary idea at that time because he shifted the focus of criticism from the content part to the technology and the medium part. He also suggested that human identity is constructed through technology.

In the beginning of the 20th century, machines were working in the area of reproduction and we have seen how Adorno and Horkheimer and other critics have looked at the impact of this industrialization, production on our culture. But by the time McLuhan had started to write we find that the technological world was shifting its focus from machines of reproduction to machines of production.

The idea of cyberspace was about to begin which, basically, is a non-space because it is a virtual reality and virtual reality also becomes a reality in this world. So, Marshall McLuhan had started talking about connections among media, technology, market forces, culture and gender in a way which could not be perceived before him.

McLuhan was a first media theorist who sensitized us towards this aspect that the boundaries amongst all these factors, which affect in shape of her worldview are continuously becoming blurred and porous at the same time.

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- For a contemporary person trained in technology, it may be a surprise that McLuhan's thought is rooted in liberal arts: grammar, rhetoric and logic, known as the *trivium*
- Major Influences: the works of Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, T.S. Eliot, James Joyce. As well as the New Criticism
- The French symbolists - Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Laforgue, Mallarmé and Valéry
- Harold Innis, the Canadian 'Technological Realist'
- Catholic thought



For a contemporary person who has been trained in technology, it is very difficult to imagine that McLuhan's thought was not rooted in technology. He was by training a person of liberal arts. He had trained in what is known as the *trivium*, grammar, rhetoric and logic. He was influenced by the works of 20th century literature, the works of Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, T.S. Elliot, James Joyce. He was also influenced by the school of new criticism. At the same time, he was attracted towards and influenced by the French symbolists including Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Laforgue, Mallarme and Valery. The impact of Harold Innis, who is known primarily as a Canadian technological realist is also dominantly felt in his work. Another aspect of this life, which is normally not perceptibly present in his work is his catholic identity. But we find that in the background the catholic thought and the catholic identity is also shaping his world view.

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- Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century media technology – cinema/radio/print – offered new ways of perceiving the world. Changes in the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- McLuhan – The Mechanical Age and the Electric Age
- Age of Machine has its natural corollary in print culture –of explosion, separation, and serialization of function
- Print media reflects a culture which produced a fragmented, private experience of the world
  - Composed of repeatable, mechanical technology
  - Smooth uniform lines of type and organization

In the early 20th century, we find that the media technology was dominated by cinema, radio and print, which were offering continually newer ways of perceiving the world. But in the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century we find that these forces of media were becoming obsolete and to a certain extent, they were being sidelined by the new developments and technology and media.

Looking at these changes Marshall McLuhan has thought of the 20th century media as two ages, the **mechanical age** and the **electric age**. According to Marshall McLuhan the age of machine that is the beginning of the 20th century technological status where machines used to reproduce things. So, this age of machine is a natural corollary to the culture, which could be established by the medium of print. It was a culture of explosion, separation and serialisation of function. It was a situation, a representation of a technology where it was an orderly serial and incessant production of goods.

So print media reflected a culture which produced a private experience of the world, which was also fragmented because when an individual focused on the printed medium the person had to go inwards. So the medium of the print was composed of mechanical and repeatable technology, it had smooth lines of type and there was a very smooth organisation also. It was also the situation, which had generated a particular type of mindset, but McLuhan suggests that this mechanical age is being replaced by what he has termed as the electric age.

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- The Electric Age
- Machines were an outerring of a process in the modernist era
- Electric age begins the extension of our central nervous system
- "We have put our central nervous system outside us in electric technology"
- World is re-configured – it experiences implosion and decentralization
- Flexibility of multiple small centers
- "Proliferation of smaller truths"



In the machine age, in the beginning of the 20th century particularly, we find that machines were an outerring of a process. They augmented the physical faculties of human being only, but in the electric age, we find that the extension of our central nervous system through technology has already started. To quote from McLuhan, We have put out central nervous system outside us in electric technology.

In his views it is in the electric age, did the world is being continuously reconfigured; it experiences implosion as well as decentralization. To quote postmodernist thinks, this was the age when there was a "proliferation of a smaller truths" and there was a flexibility in one's interpretation of what constituted truth or perfection or similar type of values and there was a multiplicity of smallest centres and fragmented interpretations of fact.

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- Computers generate
- An electric information movement which is a mosaic of simultaneous touch and interplay
- Mosaic is discontinuous, skewed, non-linear
- Simultaneity of electric communication makes each of us present and accessible to every other person in the world
- What emerges is a "global village" (p.101)
- Socially and culturally, we are like nomads – information gathering and data processing



Marshall McLuhan was writing at a time when the computers were not a reality, but he was able to prophetically envisage the shape, the media would take later on. So, we find that computers generate an electric information movement which is a mosaic of simultaneous touch and interplay. This mosaic is also nonlinear, it is simultaneous and at the same time, it is this cute.

The simultaneity of electric communication makes each of us present and accessible to every other person in the world. This was not possible in the previous mediums because the technological advancement and the nature of media which was decided by the technological advancement was different. In this situation, in this type of media and information what emerges is a global village.

So he says that socially and culturally in our contemporary days we are like early nomads, people who used to frequently move from one place to another. And our existence like nomads is based on information gathering and the way we are processing data is in fact is a way of gathering information in the same way nomads used to do.

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- Envisaged an electric global network – five years before the ARPANET INTERNET PROTOTYPE was launched
- Emphasized the central role of information in technological economy long before it became a commonplace in late 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Speculated on the next stage of transferring our consciousness to the computer world
- Two types of media – hot and cold
  - HOT – high definition medium – participation is low – films
  - COLD – low definition medium – participation is high- TV

He had envisaged five years before the ARPANET INTERNET PROTOTYPE was launched, an electrical global network and he had emphasized the central role of information in technological economy long before it became a commonplace towards the end of the 20th century. We can also speculate on the next stage of transferring our consciousness to the computer world and then according to these developments as he had envisaged, he has also interpreted the media to be of two types in nature. And he had put forward this analogy of hot



and cold mediums, which would be dominating the world of information. According to him the hot media is high definition medium in which the participation of people or audience is low and the cold medium is a low definition medium in which the participation of audience is high.

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### Electric Age

- The main purpose of his study was to provide society with the knowledge of the capabilities of new media technologies and its effects on mankind
- Significant eras:
  - Preliterate/tribal age, literacy age, print age which de-tribalized people by encouraging internal withdrawal and yet strangely generated a sense of nationalism, as print demanded “personal fragmentation and social uniformity” simultaneously
- Electric age begins with the discovery of electricity and telegraph in the 1830s
  - New type of society – disfigured by new media technology and is transported to a Global Village
- Media: Telephone, Radio, TV, Films, communication as well as entertainment



The main idea of his study towards the analysis of mechanical and electric age was to understand the capabilities of new media technology and how it can affect the mankind and shape our culture in a particular manner. He has analysed human history as living through different ages. He has talked about the preliterate or tribal age and then he has talked about the literacy age and ultimately he has talked about the print age in which people were detribalized by encouraging an internal withdrawal and yet strangely the print medium had generated a sense of nationalism.

As the medium of print demanded to quote from McLuhan “personal fragmentation and social uniformity” simultaneously. The idea of looking at the development of human culture through these ages from the perspective of McLuhan is to focus our attention to how our culture and interactions particularly are shaped by the availability of particular forms of media.

He says that the electric age begins with the discovery of electricity particularly telegraph in the 1830s. So it had generated a new type of society and it is disfigured by the new media technology later on and he was able to envisage this idea of global village. So in the days he

was writing we find that previously used mediums for dissemination of information and news. For example, the radio, the telephone et cetera were also being used as entertainment.

So, the media had already changed its role and its shape and the way it used to affect the daily lives of the people by the time McLuhan was writing. So, he was able to look at the changing role of media and could envisage the future developments in technology and could be almost in a prophetic manner foresee the shape of things to come and how the media and technology couple together would be giving a particular shape to our culture.

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## Electric Age

- Enmeshing of the aural, oral and visual
- A major shift from the Print culture as, "print [centralized] socially and [fragmented] psychically, whereas the electric media bring[s] man together in a tribal village that is a rich and creative mix, where there is actually more room for creative diversity than within the homogenized mass urban society of Western man"
- Promotes unification and involvement



In his analysis of electric age, we find that the oral, aural and visual aspects are enmeshed together. He himself says that the medium of print promotes unification and involvement and as we have seen earlier. He has talked about how socially the print media encourages fragmentation whereas the electric media brings man together in a tribal village. And according to him the tribal village is a rich and creative mix where there is actually more room for creative diversity than within the homogenized mass urban society of western man.

So according to Marshall McLuhan, the electric age would be able to enhance the creativity and participation of the people by making information more and more accessible.

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- Electric circuitry transcends the limits of "time" and "space"
- Reconfigures dialogue on a global scale
- Retribalization: Return to mythic forms/patterns on a larger scale
- Global Village: "[In] the global village [mankind] no longer [has] to be anywhere in order to do everything. The same information is available at the same moment from every part of the world"
- Internet and social sites



Marshall McLuhan has suggested that electric circuitry transcends limits of time and space and thereby reconfigures dialogue on a global scale. We can access a person living on a different continent almost simultaneously. These media and technological advancements would again be pushing us towards the ideas of tribalization. We might be returning to mythic forms and patterns on a much larger scale.

So this has been made real with the advent of the internet technology and social sites. But we have to remember that at the time McLuhan was writing, it did not actually exist and he was only able to envisage the shape, the things would take in a logical pattern. McLuhan has suggested that the electric age is a technological extension of human consciousness. It is governed by the simultaneity and instantaneity of information. So now, in this age we know more about other men.

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- Electric age: Technological extension of consciousness
- Simultaneity and instantaneity of information
- We know more and more about men and ourselves
- Transform more of ourselves into other forms of expression that go beyond ourselves
- Possible to store and translate vast information
- End of psychic, social, economic, and political provincialism
- Transformation of cities into information channels

We also know more about the world, different places and it is expected that we would know more about ourselves. So this is an inundation of information. It transfers more of ourselves into other forms of expression that go beyond ourselves. So this type of inclusion and exclusion simultaneously was not possible in the previous forms of media. So it is now possible to store and translate vast information simultaneously for any number of people.

So this is also an end of provincialism in every way, for example we can say that this simultaneity and instantaneity of information ends the social, economic and political as well as psychic provincialism and in his ideas ultimately the cities should transform into information channels where people would be able to access information simultaneously.

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- Electromagnetic technology requires human submissiveness
- Electronic technology is total and inclusive; older technologies were fragmentary
- External consensus and conscience as important as individual consciousness
- Automation and information retrieval transforms all goods into commodities under electric technology
- Under electric technology the entire business of man becomes learning and knowing.

Electromagnetic technology requires submissiveness on the part of human beings. It is total and inclusive whereas older technologies were fragmentary, but the contemporary electrical technology requires a submission, an emersion on a scale which could not be imagined in the previous types of mediums. So let us say that the external consciousness and conscience have become as important to us today as our own individual consciousness.

So, this automation and information retrieval transforms all goods into commodities and under this electric technology we find that the entire business of man becomes learning and knowing, seeking information continually and this also explains the analogy which McLuhan had given to the modern man, the analogy of us being nomads in our own life.

McLuhan has also been able to look at the effects of electric media on the consciousness and psyche of men individually as well as collectively. And he has also been able to list the possible violent and negative effects of technology.

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- Violent effects of electric media
- Immersion of man in the continuous growth of media and its adaptation
- transitional period of confusion. Source of greater alienation amongst different generations
- Wars, revolutions, civil uprisings are interfaces within the new environments created by electric media
- identity crisis
- Breakdown of older structures of meaning and of traditional communities,
- Nervous breakdown



He has rightly suggested that human being would be absolutely immersed in the continuous growth of media and its adaptation. We have also seen that technology and media are shifting ways in such a quick fashion that one has to be immersed in them in order to keep pace with them. But, at the same time this transitional period would also generate a confusion. It would also be a source of greater alienation amongst different generations.

It is said sometimes that one is organically related with the age of which one is a product. So we are organically related with the moods of our own age and therefore these sudden and

unimaginable changes in media and technology would generate a sense of alienation also among different generations. Particularly among those generations who are not able to keep pace with these changes.

It would also result into wars, revolutions and civil uprisings in those situations when people are not able to either understand it or unable to cope with these advancements. McLuhan has suggested that human nature normally responds with violence towards all those phenomena which it is not able to comprehend.

This is his prophecy at a larger social level, but we find that at an individual level also he has predicted that this latest technology and media would also generate some type of identity crisis. There would be a breakdown of older structure of meaning and of traditional communities and people who are unable to cope with it or who are absolutely immersed in the new technology and are not able to keep pace with these frictions between the real world and the virtual world would be facing these situations like nervous breakdown, identity crisis in a very violent manner.

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“[As men become] tribally metamorphosed by the electric media, we all become Chicken Littles, scurrying around frantically in search of our former identities, and in the process unleash tremendous violence. As the preliterate confronts the literate in the Post-literate area, as new information patterns inundate and uproot the old, mental breakdowns of varying degrees – including the collective nervous breakdowns of whole societies unable to resolve their crises of identity – will become very common.”



And I quote from McLuhan, “as men become tribally metamorphosed by the electric media, we all become Chicken Littles, scurrying around frantically in search of our former identities and in the process unleashed tremendous violence. As the preliterate confronts the literate in the post-literate area as new information patterns inundate and uproot the old mental breakdown of varying degrees- including the collective nervous breakdowns of whole societies unable to resolve their crises of identity will become very common”.

So, Marshall McLuhan has raised issues of identity at a different level also. In a situation, in a media situation particularly when everybody becomes totally involved in everybody else how is one to establish ones identity.

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- Issues of Identity
- “When everybody becomes totally involved in everybody, how is one to establish identity? *Quest for identity is a central aspect of the electric age.* Violence is the only method by which people have ever learned to assert or define identity: terrorists, hijackers, these are people”
- Spiritual form of information: transformation of lives into a global village, extended human family, and a single consciousness?
- Changes in education
  - Traditional schooling would pave the way for new age schooling
  - Lack of involvement in traditional mores as the youth gets immersed in their own world
  - Video clippings, films, discussions



So quest for identity would also be a central aspect of the electric age. One can obviously say that quest for identity has been a motive of inspiration for mankind since ages, but the way the quest for identity would be interpreted in the electric age is very different. He further says that violence is the only method by which people have ever learnt to assert or define identity and then he says that in order to come to a news channel people may even prefer to become terrorist or hijackers et cetera.

At the same time, we find that he has suggested a transformation of lives into a global village, which can be perhaps an extended human family which can perhaps also replace the collective consciousness in a uniform manner, but these are still issues which are yet to be resolved.

Another aspect of McLuhan’s writing and the impact of media which he has listed is the changing ways of the way education is given and received. He has also suggested that the traditional schooling would pave for the new age schooling and there would be lack of involvement in traditional mores as the youth gets immersed in their own world. Like the rest of the experience, which is fragmentary in the electric age the systems of education would also become fragmented and classified form of structure, would become soon redundant.

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- Fragmentary
- Classified form of structure would be redundant
- Interactive platform: teacher no longer the one to transmit knowledge
- Students no longer passive
- Multi-disciplinarity
- Integrated learning
- Blurring of the categories of work/play
- Classroom boundaries blur
- Recent shift to information age(coined by Daniel Bell)  
—world wide web, computers, internet—more  
interactive and involved than electric age



So, education would rather become an interactive platform where teacher is not a single authority to transmit knowledge and books are not the only source. So, students are also no longer passive in the electric age. So, it would be an era of integrated learning of multidisciplinary and categories of work and play would also be blurred.

The classroom boundaries would also blur and the recent shifts to the information age and this phrase information age has been coined by Daniel Bell. This is the age of world wide web computers, internet which are making education and media more interactive and involved even in comparison to the electric age. So, these ideas of Marshall McLuhan which foresee a particular type of change in media, affect our culture and among other things they also affect the shape of education as it is being given and received in any society.

McLuhan has also talked about the future of mankind, the future shapes our culture would take, in a very interesting interview which he had given to Frank Kermode in 1956.

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## The Future of Man in the Electric Age

- 1956 interview of McLuhan to Frank Kermode
- Visit Marshall McLuhan Speaks Special collection to view the video:  
<http://marshallmcluhanspeaks.com/interview/1965-the-future-of-man-in-the-electricage/>

### Summary of main arguments

- Gutenberg technology was extremely mechanical
  - Associated with assembly-line
  - Fragmentation of functions-industrialization
- Gutenberg technology combined with the industrial revolution led to specialism all the way



The link is given here. We have to summarise the main arguments which McLuhan has presented in this interview. He starts by saying that the Gutenberg technology, the technology which made the printing revolution possible was extremely mechanical and as we have seen earlier it resulted into an industrialisation, a particular type of attitude and it combined with industrial revolution and lead to a specialism all the way.

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- Ends in electric or electromagnetism—an extension of the nervous system, not just an extension of body
- “Electromagnetism seems to be in its technological manifestations an extension of our nerves and becomes mainly an information system.”  
(McLuhan 1956)
  - Feedback or looped system
  - Shift to an age of circuit (an extreme of the age of wheel)
  - Reversal of characteristics of age of wheel



However, in this interview he also says that the electromagnetism would be an extension of the nervous system; it would not be an extension just of the bodily functions as the previous machines had done. But, the electric age would made extension of the central nervous system of human beings. It seems to be in its technological manifestations and extension of our nerves and as McLuhan says becomes mainly an information system.

He has also talked about the feedback or the loop system which would be available in this system. A shift to an age of circuit which is an extreme of the age of wheels and he has also predicted a reversal of the characteristics of the age of wheel.

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What difference is the electric technology making to our interest in content and in what the medium actually says?

Massive increase in the flow of information. Movement of complex data at high speeds

- Not amenable to process this information in old fragmentary patterns of the mechanical age
- Tendency to go back to mythic and structural forms to process data in the age of circuitry
- Pattern recognition and its need—computers, electronic data
- Pattern recognition similar to the mythic forms of making sense of experience
- Electric Age has made us more dependent on technology
- Youth may lose identity and respond with violence
- Quick and almost immediate changes in environment by laying cables
- Require education of/about media to avoid its negative influences

It also makes us think about the differences which the electric technology is making to our interest in content and also in what the medium actually says. As McLuhan has rightly said there is a complex data movement at high speeds and there is a massive increase in the flow of information. Our dependency on technology and also on media has grown tremendously. It may result in identity crisis; it may result in violence also. But at the same time we find that these changes are capable of quickly introducing major shifts and changes in our environment.

People require education about the use of media if they have to avoid the negative influences in this age. He also suggests that if we look at the patterns of recognition and the processing of information in our current age we will find that it is very similar to the mythic forms of making sense of experience.

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## Impact of new electric media

- Feedback system: idea “of being involved in one’s own participation, in one’s own audience participation, is a natural product of circuitry” (McLuhan)
- Everything is looped.
- One’s perception of oneself undergoes complete change
- Creation of an entirely new environment
- Drive towards regional forms of culture—effect of deeper involvement in circuitry



In this feedback system, the idea of being involved in one’s own participation in one’s own audience participation is a natural product of circuitry. In this situation where everything is looped, unconnected, our perception of our own self undergoes a complete change and we create an entirely new environment and as we have seen it is real as well as virtual. It may also push us towards regional forms of culture. Towards the localities of things and it may also effect a deeper involvement in circuitry.

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- Suggests that greater involvement with ourselves would produce the need for complete understanding of human environment
  - Character of human environment is invisible in other ages; artists drew attention to it
  - In a continuous looped system, human environment becomes more visible
  - No space for unconscious aspects
  - Need for complete autonomy
  - Human environment as an artifact of scrutiny

He also suggests that the greater involvement with ourselves would produce the need for complete understanding of our environment also. He says that the character of human environment is invisible in previous ages and it was only the work of the artists and sears to draw the attention of the people towards it. However, in the electric age where everything is continuously interconnected and looped.

The human environment becomes more visible and discernible to everyone, there is no space for unconscious aspects, and at the same time there is a need for complete autonomy, a sense of responsibility and autonomy, which could not be perceived and imagined in the previous stages of human development. So human environment also becomes an artefact of scrutiny with onset of the electric age.

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### The Electric Age – The Age of Implosion.

McLuhan (1962)

- Explosion of the electric age has led to an implosion of our categories and patterns of perception.
  - Greater awareness of others at greater distances
  - Greater physical and psychic involvement
  - Notion of the global village
- As global villagers, all men must now accommodate their judgments to the complex interdependence understood and manipulated by villagers
- The concept of global village was prophetic— relevant in the age of information technology and internet



So this is the age of implosion as McLuhan has rightly suggested. Explosion of the electric age has led to an implosion of our categories and patterns of perception. We have a greater awareness of other people at greater distances. There is a greater physical and psychic involvement and ultimately it leads us to what he has described as the notion of the global village. The concept of global village was prophetic. It was relevant in the age of McLuhan, we find that it has become more relevant in our age of information technology and internet.

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## Global Village

"Today with instantaneous global communications the entire planet is, for purposes of inter-communication, a village rather than a vast imperial network".

"Another aspect ... which results from instantaneous flows of information from every part of a situation, from every quarter, is that we develop a new attitude to space, a new attitude to time. The globe becomes a very small village-like affair".

"After three thousand years of specialist explosion and of increasing specialism and alienation in the technological extensions of our bodies, our world has become compressional by dramatic reversal. As electrically contracted, the globe is no more than a village. Electric speed in bringing all social and political functions together in a sudden implosion has heightened human awareness of responsibility to an intense degree".



On this particular slide there are some quotes from McLuhan which explain his idea of the global village in a very succinct manner. We have to look at McLuhan's ideas of global village of the hot and cold media, not as an academic straightjacketed definition of theory, but rather an empirical observation of the era of 1950s.

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- Not a theory, but an empirical observation of the era of 1950s (centrality of the iconic images of TV)
  - Image of the global village and the obsolescence of the orality/literacy dichotomy
- Communication technology didn't rely on one single mode of encoding information and representing the world
  - Ambivalent relation of the pictorial image/written word; combination of the oral and visual field—Radio, TV, Film; moving images with sound
  - Orality and literacy not constitutive of a particular world anywhere
  - Simultaneously visible everywhere
  - This obsolescence a beginning
- Employs the image of global village to promote global thinking: "total interdependence, and super imposed coexistence" (Gutenberg Galaxy 31)



He was talking about media and the future shapes of media, in a decade where there was a centrality of the iconic images of TV. So image of the Global Village as he had predicted and the obsolescence of the orality and or literacy dichotomy has to be perceived and reviewed from a perspective of this awareness that he was writing in a particular time. Communication technology as we see it now does not rely on one single mode of encoding information and representing the world.



There is an ambivalent relation of the pictorial image as well as the written work. There is a combination of the oral and visual field through these mediums of radio, TV and films, which were already dominant in the times of McLuhan, we find that there was this combination of moving image with sound. But now we find that their association and their interconnectedness has become more intense.

Orality and literacy do not constitute of a particular world anywhere, but now they are simultaneously visible everywhere. So in this context McLuhan has employed the image of Global Village to promote global thinking. Total independence and superimposed coexistence.

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### Global Village: Problem areas

- Global village is not a picture of utopia—aware of the problems
- Division because of diversity can lead to disagreement
- “The spaces and times are pulled out from between people. A world in which people encounter each other in depth all the time. The tribal-global village is far more divisive — full of fighting — than any nationalism ever was. Village is fission, not fusion, in depth all the time. (McLuhan “The Hot and Cool Interview” 57–58)
- Rather, the global village is an illness and/or state of hypnosis, hallucination or manic states arising from the ceaseless pressure on the global human community to create a consensus (or ratio) among dilated and/or extended senses (“Article for ‘Encounter’” 22).
- McLuhan’s solution: Establishment of a “global city” as a center for village margins.



McLuhan has also been able to foresee certain problem areas. He has rightly commented that this is not a picture of Utopia and he has listed several problems also. Foremost among them is the possibility of division because of diversity which can often lead to disagreement and I quote from McLuhan’s interview, “The spaces and time are pulled out from between people. A world in which people encounter each other in depth all the time. The tribal-global village is far more divisive- full of fighting- than any nationalism ever was. Village is fission, not fusion, in depth all the time”. He goes to the extent of saying that the Global Village is rather an illness or a state of hypnosis, hallucination or manic states arising from the ceaseless pressures on the global human community to create a consensus or ratio among dilated and or extended sense. So his solution for this situation is the establishment of a global city as a centre for village margins.

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- Can the concept of Global village be compared, contrasted and critiqued alongside other theories?
- Toffler's future shock
- Bell's "post industrial society"
- Lyotard's "post-modern condition"
- Fukuyama's "end of history"
- Castells' "network society"
- Cairncross' "death of distance"
- Taylor's "moment of complexity"
- Keen's "cult of the amateur"



The idea of the global village, which McLuhan has presented, is not a new concept. We find that several other similar ideas have been presented by theorists and thinkers and dreamers from time to time. All of us would be familiar with the names and concepts which are listed here, for example Toffler's future shock, or Bell's "post-industrial society" or Lyotard's "post-modern condition", Fukuyama's "end of history", Castell's "network society", Cairncross' "death of distance", Taylor's "moment of complexity" and Keen's "cult of the amateur". The significance of McLuhan; however, cannot be diminished by these doubts which can be raised easily towards his theoretical approaches.

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- Effects of technology are not to transfer idea or rational speculation
- But inevitably and fundamentally to transform our appreciation of the world
- "Effects of technology do not occur at the level of opinions and concepts. But alter sense ratios or patterns of perception – steadily and without resistance."- McLuhan

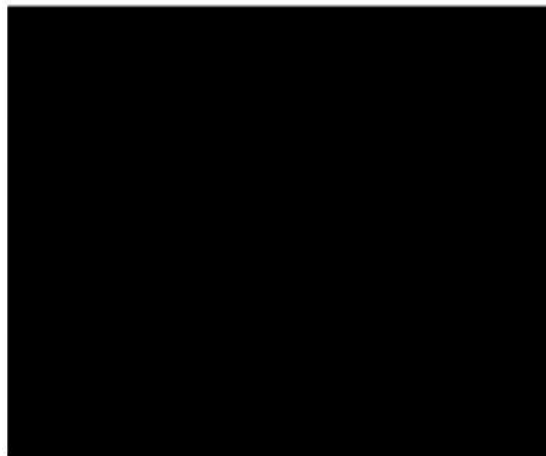
He had pointed out that the effects of technology are not limited only to the transferring of idea or rational speculation, but the effects of technology changed our appreciation of the world effectively and fundamentally and he emphasized the central role of information. He

has rightly said that the effects of technology do not occur at the level of opinions and concepts.

But, they alter sense ratios or patterns of perception steadily and without resistance. So these ideas are significant in today's age also. Particularly his ideas that the effect of technology changes our sense ratios and patterns of perception steadily, continuously and also without resistance. We do not even become aware of the fact that our perceptions are being changed, but they are always continually in the process of being changed. Here I have given a link to a particular video.

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### McLuhan's Predictions About Technology



Link:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=viulKgjLnDE>



In which we can look at McLuhan's predictions about technology. It gives us a beautiful insight into the mind of this great thinker. We would continue in the next slide a discussion of McLuhan's distinction between two forms of media, hot and cold. Thank you.