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DIGITAL LITERACY, MEDIA CONSUMPTION AND CULTURAL EXCLUSION - A STUDY ON THE LODHA TRIBAL COMMUNITY OF INDIA

Abstract:

In today's volatile globalized world, our daily existence is observed to be highly dependent on digital literacy and new media consumption. Yet at the same time, while some social groups exist within a dynamic and highly advanced technology-enabled media life, some others are still happy to sustain a media existence that adheres to, and promotes all that is conventional and predictable. The reasons for this preference towards a traditional media existence could be many - lack of access to a digitized world, unconcern and indifference towards a technologically-advanced media, or lack of interest from coming out of a familiar and comfortable media space. Nevertheless, it is widely observed that when changes are wrought in communities and societies relating to technological advancements, it is the youth who are both its primary architect, and also the consumers. And in today's world of instant connectivity, no matter how remote a community is located in a country's map, the youths certainly find a way out to 'connect' to the outer world, or access the myriad entertainment outlets that new media has to offer. So how does this digital literacy and new media accessibility affect the social and cultural life of closed communities who have always been bound by specific cultural customs and traditions that gives them their unique identity? This change is now also visible among the Lodha tribal community of India, which was never observed before. The Lodhas are one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) of India, and are primarily found in the eastern Indian states of Odisha and West Bengal. They are forest dwellers and depend on the forest produce for their daily subsistence. The young people of the Lodha community are today observed to be moving away from their traditional cultural systems and into a more urbanized existence that is far removed from the life known to their previous generations. The research question that this study seeks to answer is - "Is there any interrelationship between new media existence and cultural exclusion among the youths of the Lodha community?" The study would be conducted among the Lodhas of Mayurbhanj district of Odisha to find out the extent of cultural exclusion among the Lodha youths. The study thus seeks to highlight the different aspects of cultural marginalization among the Lodha youth due to the influence of new media, which is being increasingly observed to be highly intrusive and all pervasive.

Keywords:

Digital literacy, cultural exclusion, new media, Lodha community, tribals, India