

Digital Technologies: Boon and Bane

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Globalization is taking over the world. We have access to anything and everything with a good digital device and internet. Adults have more access to world news, interesting content, and social media while children have more games to play and more funny videos to watch. It's easier for everyone to connect with their loved ones. From children to adults to the older generation, everyone is using the technology available in their hands according to their interests. However, this can easily turn into addiction.

In this age of digitization and the internet, the growing use of devices can easily turn into addiction and may go unnoticed for children. When a device is taken away from them, they might feel anxious or throw a violent fit, akin to withdrawal symptoms one may experience. Tiny tots are naïve and do not know that technology could be largely damaging for them. Adults may get confused, but they might not be able to recognize the downside of technology as it is a topic less explored. They are voiceless in a democracy as they have no voting right. Less and less children are seen out in parks and gardens as they prefer watching videos on social networking websites. They are missing out on the joy and adventure which childhood brings.

Now, the time has arrived when Indians must speak out to save millions of children from the war of digital encroachment which they are facing unknowingly. The last 10 years have been nothing less than disastrous for the development of Indian children whose parents are themselves misinformed about the digital revolution. These machines and devices which should ideally be making lives easier are now subtly controlling our lives. In every household including the families of humble backgrounds, children are eating food only with mobile phones in their hands, watching one video



after the other. Some of that content is not even meant to be consumed by children.

In the name of cartoons Tik Toks, Instagram reels, YouTube shorts etc. – which children always prefer to watch – have abusive language, scary depictions, abnormal food habits, obnoxious scenes, and deteriorating content. In some of videos, materials of all kinds, even food items, are shown to be crushed by pointed heels of the sandals or shoes of the adults.

Developed nations who have recognized this trend are spending a huge amount of their allocated budget on holistic education of children. They are ensuring that children are not exposed to visuals of this kind and are terminating the use of content showing uncultured scenes and uncouth language.

In the Indian situation, from shanty huts of urban slums to big houses, children are exposed indiscriminately to degrading culture along with their parents through unregulated use of social media and technology. Besides

media, the screen time in itself is also a point of concern for the health of children.

Parents can help regulate the usage of devices and limit the exposure of their children to potentially harmful settings both digitally and physically. However, there are people belonging to unprivileged sections of the society who are unable to do so for their children. There is an urgent need to give a healthy childhood to the children of millions of domestic workers, daily wage earners, factory workers and those mothers who are compelled not to spend time with their children when they come back from school. They leave them out in public parks or alone at home without supervision. When they are out, they can fall prey to predators like pedophiles, child traffickers, kidnappers, and in some cases can also get exposed to violence, abusive language and even pornography. They are exposed to such harmful incidents due to the lack of a caregiver. Even the toddlers and preschoolers can also get exposed due to lack of awareness among the adults about the detrimental effects on the mental wellbeing of the tiny tots.

We can suggest the Government of India as well as the State Government to really think of creches for women workers in their workplace or nearby. In that way, children can still be under the protective gaze of their parents and live in a safe and caring environment. Parents, especially mothers, will be able to breathe a sigh of relief knowing that her child is safe and she can easily reach him or her if she wants. We must be vigilant and practice caution with technology as well. Managing screen time and regulating content viewed by children should be prioritized. Adults can set a healthy example to the young ones by practicing it first.

A child should be seen as an asset to the country, a human who needs care and protection to flourish and thus should not be exposed to materials unsuitable for his/her age. Of course, that is nothing less than utopia. But now is the time when community togetherness and sympathy for the well-being of little ones should be encouraged.

