

Abstract

Beyond Digital Transformation: An Amalgamation of Culture, Technology, and Society in the Select Novels of Neal Stephenson

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This thesis analyses the transformation in cultural and social life of human beings due to technological enhancements. The amalgamation of human beings and technology are understood by cyborg anthropology, which paves way to analyze the life of human beings in the technologically advanced society in an anthropological perspective. The interaction of human beings with technology is studied through three aspects of cyborg anthropology. They are the role of science and technology as a cultural phenomenon; the transformation of human beings as cyborgs in the technological society; and the role of science and technology as a shaping tool of society.

The thesis has been divided into five chapters. Chapter I titled 'Introduction' focuses on the origin and growth of anthropology till the contemporary period and anthropological writers are traced. It lists out the sub-disciplines of anthropology as physical or biological anthropology, social or cultural anthropology, archeological anthropology and linguistic anthropology. It also traces the growth and objectives of cyborg anthropology, an upcoming sub-discipline of anthropology. It offers a brief insight into the origin and growth of American literature, development of American science fiction till the age of Neal Stephenson. It attempts to give a short insight into the novels of Neal Stephenson.

Chapter II titled ‘Cultural Shift: A Culture of Science and Technology’ attempts to explain the change in culture due to technological enhancement. Cultural materialism is applied to trace the cultural change due to technological interruption. The development in technology paves way for the adaption of new cultures for the betterment of life. The cultural shift is analysed through the three stages of cultural materialism – infrastructure, structure and super structure from anthropological perspective. The select novels of Neal Stephenson explain the changes in human culture like industrialization, information transformation, education, communication and life of human beings on earth and space due to the interruption of technological enhancements in human life.

Chapter III titled ‘Human Beings and Technology: A Growing Hybridization’ highlights the transformation of human beings as cyborgs due to technological adaption in the digitalized world in the select novels of Neal Stephenson. The physical and mental transformation of human beings due to the development of technology is analysed. The technological enhancement, its necessity in the current scenario and the consequences in the usage of technology are explored through his select novels.

Chapter IV titled ‘Societal Change Through Technological Adaption’ throws light on the impact of technological development and its implementation in the society. In the select novels of Neal Stephenson, technological developments act as a shaping tool of the society. This chapter brings out the changes in the society due to the transformation of human beings as cyborgs. The constructive way of living in the technological society is analysed through Actor Network Theory.

Chapter V titled “Summation” sums up all the chapters. It glues together the three aspects of cyborg anthropology. It proves that technology and human beings are inseparable. The separate concept of man and machine gets blurred. The research sharpens on the cultural change and the technology as a shaping tool of the society. On the whole, the research endeavours to assure mankind that technology has become a part of human life. Digitalization can be done in technologies and data but not in the bonding among people. People should have some basic qualities of humanity, kindness, compassion, selflessness and patience. When a technology is introduced it has its own impact on culture and society but before introducing it, a proper research should be done on it and proper guidelines have to be given for its usage and disposal. Thus the changes in culture and society are appreciated when it does not harm people and the environment. Judicious use of science and technology results in a harmonious existence of man in the society.