ABSTRACT

The rise of new digital technologies of Information and Communication, of which the Internet is the most visible, has introduced an accelerated rate of change in the global economy and socio-cultural practices. A body of work that seeks to deal with, account for and explain the ways in which every-day practices and realities are changing due to emerging (or emerged) forms of computer and digital networks is clubbed together as Cyberculture.

This dissertation locates itself within the Cyberculture discourse to develop a theoretical perspective that treats digital and internet technologies as central and integral to the practices of what I call the Technosocial Subject. Beginning with the crises of early technology studies, the dissertation maps how the emergence of digital and internet technologies in the country have shaped our understanding of technology-individual relationships. In revisiting these different crises in the Indian context, which cursorily seems to reflect common trends in other parts of the world, there is an attempt to show how they challenge existing concepts, ideas and theoretical frameworks between space, body and technology within Cyberculture.

In the process, it demonstrates how existing research and scholarship in Cyberculture is flawed in its attempt to produce universally identifiable, common resolutions to events and occurrences which require detailed contextualisation. The dissertation attempts this contextualisation through time, space, and histories of human-technology interaction, to offer new insights into understanding the material practices of the Internet, the changing patterns of regulation and control, and new forms of citizen-state relationships in the age of technology mediated life.
The dissertation proposes that inscribed within all these changes is the production of technology-mediated identities which are produced in the material and everyday transactions with new digital and Internet technologies. It looks at these transformations - the emergence of new cultural and symbolic forms of expression, spatial restructuration of cities, production of technology mediated subjectivities, and inherent tensions as these identities negotiate with existing regulation regimes – to see how the rise of a new technology (and the tools that come with it) significantly alter the processes by which a technology mediated social subjectivity is produced.

It is not the intention to propose a new theory of technologised subjectivity. Instead, the dissertation begins with a common sense understanding of Subjectivity as has been considered in Cyberculture literature and theory, as emerging out of transactions and negotiations with new technologies. The interest is more in looking at the contextual production of such identities and a further examining of the different crises that such identities signal; crises, which, in contemporary discourse, are often neglected or produced as false binaries. Such a mode of thinking relies less on the study of the content of technology, as do the disciplines of media studies and Cyberculture, and focuses upon how technologised forms materially inflect existing ways of living. The dissertation thus produces a new framework to understand the Technosocial Subject, marking its points of departure from earlier models of cyborgs or netizens to look at the subject to, of and for the future.