Chapter 8
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The understanding about the new media and its influences on higher education and especially among the students from an Uses and Gratification perspective as a matter of fact raises more questions than answers. Students have been found to be using Internet to serve certain gratification factors that include personal, social as well as academic. It impacts many ideas essentially the gratification factors that have been identified as the motives behind the use of Internet are intrinsically linked with the students mostly operating in groups. Personal gratification factors like 'information-seeking' and 'allied aggregation' have been identified as major motivating factors for the use of Internet. To put it across, information-seeking behavior spring from an urge to belong to a group. It is driven by an urge to live with the majority and not to become an information underclass. Information that is available on the web is not exactly information available on the street and among the friends. This indicates two types of tendencies among students. Firstly they are to reach out to the world beyond the immediate and secondly they have started subscribing inwardly to the idea that information is a commodity (Castells, 1996). The second factor as personal gratification dimension happens to be allied aggregation which refers to the variety of entertainment, increased socialization and for international understanding together again indicates to a craving of the students to seek a world outside their immediate world. It is needless to say that Internet has opened a plethora of possibilities but at the same time the socialization on the net is essentially an unsocial practice because of its non-transparent and non-identical community interest (McQuail, 2000). Net is
increasingly becoming a market of bagful of ideas which happens to lead a consumer to a direction that might be a misdirected one in terms of construction of the message. Net has an internal logic, that logic is imposed in terms of dissemination of ideas and also in terms of circulation of information. The logic of net to provide information, entertainment and socialization opportunities depend on market logic and marketability of all these factors. It is essentially a transnational logic which takes within its ambit a set of transnational ideas cutting across the continents and thereby involving a net user in this logic pattern and in turn separating him from his or her immediate environment. The emergence of transnational logic and the system of net as an insular agent may lead the student to a thinking frontier which might be absolutely new, alienating and alarming. A student in small town, or to put it in an ephemeral way, a small town boy or girl are too non-negotiated for understanding this design of the net. These counter ideas do not necessarily mean one has to give up using net, but rather one must not be elated with the findings that optimum use of net by higher education students for achieving personal gratification is the opening up of a new frontier of knowledge and it would lead India to be a part of a global information economy in near future and without it, it would be information laggard.

Secondly the Internet has been found to be in use among the students for serving social gratification factors. It is again a misnomer in certain ways. Internet has been hailed as a great leveler and being a horizontal medium it is certainly in a way a good forum for making friends. The emergence of Social Networking Sites has made it possible to develop a global level of friendship which is full horizontal. The ability of building friendship at the click of a mouse may turn the concepts of
friendship and socialization a part of fluid Post-modern identity. Split existence or the advantage of having multiple profiles has made web a happy destination for most of the youngsters in addition to making friends from those social strata and physical locations which would otherwise have been impossible for many of them. The fundamental problem with the formation of community on the web is that it is conspicuous by the absence of common interest which is shared by the members of a community specified by physical boundaries and dimension. The boundariless communication of 'necropolis' (Nicholas Negroponte, 1943) is both an attraction and a repulsive feature of the web. While the mental boundaries are able to transcend physical boundaries, it is as yet impossible to overcome the geo-political realities which come to the forefront as jingoistic and religious expressions in the event of a crisis within a particular geo-physical space and time. So the social gratifications sought by an average higher education student of Silchar town and his or her efforts to transcend geo-physical boundaries ultimately may not turn out to be so.

In terms of academic gratification factors sought by the respondents from the net are quite expected. Internet has been able to open up a new frontier of knowledge for them though a good portion of information and knowledge material available on the net is purely unusable to put it very softly. One may land up in huge crisis if the academic information collected from the net is not edited properly.

Although Internet revolution has been able to alter the life-style of each and every segment of the universe and this gradual penetration is not limited to youth only but has started to spread its tentacles to kids, teens and adolescents' also. Of late, kids have become familiar to this new medium by getting engaged in online
gaming and not surprisingly some even sign in to social media. This tendency is very much prevalent in developed societies and simultaneously this mediated technoculture have started to be replicated in developing societies also.

Status updating, uploading photos and videos have become a norm rather than exception now-a-days. Young students are getting addicted to update their profile and status regularly. Digital revolution has overwhelmingly captured young mind mainly because of its freedom and liberty that they enjoy in different social media. Undoubtedly social media like facebook and twitter inexorably have given a platform to youngsters to express their views freely. This Internet freedom has raised many serious issues in contemporary society. Government is trying to control this social media especially many politicians seek curbs on various social networking sites (SNS) and put restrictions on many outrageous netizens thereby the real freedom may be curtailed by external interventions. There is some contemporary debate raging over freedom of speech and expression. The idea of a libertarian society, an influential civil society and the possibility of the emergence of a 'public sphere' leading to 'communicative action' are some of the possibilities that Internet and its allied forums have started to offer because of the horizontal nature of Internet communication. Internet, on the surface of it, is a hugely unrestricted medium but beneath the veneer of horizontality, it is also an authoritative structure with a feeling of turning into a Panoptic on any day. The entire transaction of the net can be monitored, so the basic idea of ceaseless, flowing communication is fractured at the starting point. But so long the discussions on the net is not damaging the authoritarian structures and hegemonistic practices and remain restricted to essentially the level of 'peptalks' the
authority is not disturbed and has no problem is being highly liberal. Students or an average citizen willing to remain within the specified structures of westernized liberal visions of democracy are likely to get maximum out of the net for many years to come and that matters a lot in the context of India where information and knowledge are still controlled in many cases by societal and political elites as was the practice before beginning of democratization of knowledge with the arrival of printing press.