

Relevance of e-Media Power and Governance

Dr. K. Mohan

*Associate Professor & Head, Dept. of English, Madurai Kamaraj University College, Madurai
Director In charge, Institute of Spoken English, Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai*

As the process of confronting and solving problems often requires hard work and is painful, we have endless procrastination. Actually problems can be the cutting edge that actually distinguish between success and failure. They draw our innate courage and wisdom.... 1

Kalam's recommendation to Indians in the context of e-media power and its all round impact, particularly on correct political governance is to keep the eyes and ears awake.

More than that the greatest need of the hour for the postmodern individual is that he must be ever prepared for a strenuous life. The individual can match his skills and mind power, and resources to the optimum level only if he is conscious of the knowledge explosion facilitated by e-media power.

Two interesting observations are worth mentioning here. The first argument is that of F. D. Roosevelt, and it runs thus:

... I [Roosevelt] to preach, not the doctrine of ignoble ease, but the doctrine of the strenuous life, the life of toil and effort; to preach that highest form of success, which comes . . . to the man who does not shrink from danger, from hardship, or from bitter toil [My Emphasis]. ... 2

The other admirable statement is by John Fitzgerald Kennedy, and it is worth quoting here:

... all great and honorable actions are accompanied with great difficulties, and both must be enterprised and overcome with answerable courage. . . . We set sail on this new sea because there is new knowledge to be gained, and new rights to be won, and they must be won and used for the progress of all people. ... We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do other things not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills. ... 3

The centrality of this notion is as old as it is new, and it is applicable to Americans and Indians alike. There is nothing in the least superficial, external, merely popular or merely muscular, and vulgar, certainly nothing trivial about the influence and significance, relevance, and consequence of the theme of hard work.

There can be no progress in the individual or the institution, or the Nation in particular unless there is a balanced sharing of information and technology [Informatics] through the e-media.

One might pick up the value of this argument that industry and informatics and knowledge explosion through e-media go hand in hand. Educational needs are easily accessible through e-media. Trade and industry strike expansive growth by their total dependence and banking on e-media. Better marketing is facilitated by e-media resources.

Above all, correct political governance is gauged and measured against the information provided by the e-media, through newspapers, broadcasting media, television, and cable net works, and through mass communication.

There is careful and insistent and persistent scrutiny of the Political happenings through the eye of the e-media. Therefore, political defaulters, corrupt politicians, and careless official cannot escape the guillotining axe of the majority in a democratic nation like India or America.

In fine, political correctness is fast turning out to be a reality only because of the spread of information by e-media. Yet again, one finds this theme of strenuous life contributing to better results in the light of the proper application of the electronic media is reflected in the arguments of observations of such astounding and trend-setting American intellectuals such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Edwards, Woolman, Thoreau, Franklin, Washington, Adams, Jefferson Paine, and above all in Walt Whitman quotable quotes.

Incidentally, the pointed observation of William James is relevant to Americans and Indians in the context of the growing power of e-media, and hence, it is mentioned in extenso here:

The deepest difference, practically, in the moral life of man is . . . between the easy-going and the strenuous mood. When in the easy-going mood the shrinking from the present ill is our ruling consideration. . . . When, however, we believe that a God is there, and that he one of the claimants, the infinitive perspective opens out. . . . The more imperative ideals now begin to speak with an altogether new objectivity and significance, and to utter the penetrating, shattering, tragically challenging note of appeal. They ring out like the call of Victor Hugo's alpine eagle . . . and the strenuous mood awakens at the sound. All through history, in the periodical conflicts of Puritanism with the don't care temper, we see the antagonism of the strenuous and genial moods. ... 4

In this context, the valid argument of Kalam is that superiority complex is the bane of the Indian society and the Establishment. Consequentially, the majority of the Indians suffer from inferiority complex precisely because of the superior vein of the few.

Kalam's aptly framed observation is worth all the consideration that it merits:

What makes life in Indian organizations difficult is the widespread prevalence of this very contemptuous pride [born out of superiority complex]. It stops us from listening to our juniors, subordinates, and people down the line. You cannot expect a person to deliver results, if you humiliate him, nor can you expect him to be creative, if you abuse him or despise him. The line between firmness and harshness, between strong leadership and bullying, between discipline and vindictiveness is very fine, but it has to be drawn. Unfortunately, the only line prominently drawn in our country [India] today is between the "heroes" and "zeros". On one side a few hundred "heroes" keeping nine hundred and fifty million people down on the other side. This situation had to be changed. ... 5

The points that are made here that the twenty-first century calls for a strenuous way of existence combined with the explosion of the myth of the superiority complex - - de-creation of soidisant characters that entertain the superiority veneer and vein in their thought, word and deed.

Therefore, there is the need for the accommodative spirit in the dissemination, sharing and using the information and technology made possible by e-media, and the shedding one feeling superior to the other. At this juncture, one takes into serious consideration that the inadequacies that affect the Indian society and the Indian Establishment are far too many.

But the prominent ones have to be mentioned. In the first place there is the serious defect among the Indians, which is their total lack of commitment - - poignantly brought out by the French term, engagement - - [angashma].

Then there is the absence of self-reliance and the will to progress on one's own. There is also the lackadaisical attitude in the performance of one's duties and responsibilities. Above all the defect of the despicable variety is to feel big when one has no merits to think big. This defect kills the spirit of right living not only in the individual who thinks that he alone is big, but it also stifles all the spirit and enthusiasm in others to strike upward mobility in life.

It is the e-media that can focus on these defects and awaken the conscience of the Indians and offer the correctives to their mind-set. As such, the contributory effect of e-media particularly in the case of India can never be slurred over. In this context, Kalam offers splendid statement that couches his religious fervor, sentiment and religious faith.

Kalam argues that faith in God is the ultimate prerequisite, but mere faith in God alone is not the be-all and end-all of human endeavor. Faith in God is absolutely necessary, but it must be a faith in God that is firmly and strongly grounded in hard work and

commitment. In fact, only through one's own committed endeavors one can gradually increase the percentage of individual power over borrowed power.

Only then he can grow and strike progress and keep abreast with the latest, newest, and most innovate, and the freshest updates in knowledge and its application, made possible through electronic media. Kalam's argument makes interesting reading, and hence it is quoted below:

I [Kalam] have always been a religious person in the sense that I maintain a working partnership with God.

I was aware that the best work required more ability than I possessed and therefore needed help that Only God can give me. I made a true estimate of my own ability, then raised it by 50 [fifty] per cent and put myself in God's hands. In this partnership, I have always received all the power I needed, and in fact have actually felt it flowing through me. Today, I can affirm that the Kingdom of God is within you in the form of this power, to help achieve your goals, and realize your dreams [My Emphasis]. ... 6

Yet again, Kalam argues that those that wield control in this electronic media age should be discrete and prudent and wise enough to execute their control over others. The point that is made here is that control over others should not be discriminate, and unjustifiable. When control sways away from the social justice track, it begins to stifle the spirit to work in others. The pointed observation of Kalam deserves to be recorded in extenso here:

A basic aspect of a person's working style is how he plans and organizes tasks. At one extreme is the cautious planner, who carefully spells out each step before making any move. With a sharp eye for what can possibly go wrong, he tries to cover all contingencies. At the other end is the fast mover, who weaves and dodges without a plan. Inspired by an idea, the fast mover is always ready for action. Another aspect of a person's working style is control -- the energy and attention devoted to ensuring that things in a certain way. At one extreme is the tight controller, a strict administrator, with frequent checkpoints. Rules and policies are to be followed with religious fervor. At the opposite end are those who move with freedom and flexibility. They have little patience for bureaucracy. They delegate easily and give their power subordinates wide latitude for movement. I wanted leaders who tread the middle path, those who could control without stifling dissent or being rigid.... 7

Furthermore, it ought to be stressed here that technology, unlike science is a group activity. It is in this spirit the outcome, spread and dissemination of e-media messages and information. In this context, the two striking and interesting observations made by Kalam, deserve to be closely examined one in conjunction with that of the other. The first splendid observation of Kalam reads thus:

The concept of Technology Management [in the context of e-media power and its application] has its roots in the Development Management models, which originated in the early sixties out of a conflict between harmony-seeking and output-oriented management structures.

There are basically two types of management orientations: primal, which values an economic employee, and rational, which values an organizational employee. My concept of management is woven around an employee who is a technology person [*Italics as in the Original*]... 8

The second statement of Kalam, which is of an absorbing nature, is quoted in extenso, and it runs thus:

The tree of technology management takes root not only if here is the self-actualization of needs, renewal, interdependence, and natural flow. The growth patterns are characteristic of evolution process, which means that things move in a combination of slow change and sudden transformation; each transformation causes either a leap into a new, more complex level or a devastating crash to some other level; dominant models reach a certain peak of success when they turn troublesome; and the rate of change always accelerates.

The stem of the tree is the molecular structure in which all actions are formative, all practices are normative, and all decisions are integrative. The branches of this tree are resources, assets, operations, and products, which are nourished by the stem through a continuous performance evaluation and corrective update.

The tree of technology management, if carefully tended, bears the fruits of an adaptive infrastructure: technology empowering of the institutions, the generation of technical skills among people, and finally self-reliance of the nation and improvement in the quality of life of its citizenry [My Emphasis]. ... 9

It is in such a spirit one fully appreciates the technological peaks scaled by the e-media in the twenty-first century. In fact, e-media is the solid and dependable source for effecting political correctness.

It is, therefore, stressed that the revolution in communication and the communication reachability attained through information technologies and particularly, through e-media, are phenomenal.

They unleash a new economy. They usher in political correctness, as stated a little earlier. They promote better understanding and cause comity of nations. They create a new awareness among the learners and facilitate faster, more effective, and highly dependable means of learning more and assimilating more of knowledge and thereby quickly widening their intellectual horizons.

In fact, the world, in the twenty-first century, has been hit by a wave of innovations, the likes of which were never witnessed in the past centuries.

Centered round e-media, telecommunications, and informatics, these innovations are producing a real information technology revolution, which is, in turn, seeking off side revolutions wherever applications of these technologies have been developed and implemented.

Industries developed by these innovative technologies and their applications include biotechnology, biochemistry, robotics, miniature motors, software production, and high performance materials. Even the relatively more mundane field of transport has been revolutionized by the new containers, hub airports, and overnight shipping systems, made possible by e-media.

The on-going development and the improvement of e-media indicate that the information technology revolution is a continual process. Three factors have to be underscored here.

1. Over the next twenty years, the cost of telecommunication may well drop to the point that it will become a virtually free commodity.
2. New data comprehension techniques and smart combinations of fiber and wireless communications will practically eliminate bandwidth constraints, and will knock connection costs down to a few dollars per station in about a decade.
3. A full transition to digitalization is still years away, but when it happens, and when near universal networks serve the planet some twenty years from now, there will be a convergence of the telecommunications, computers, and media industries into what some have aptly called the "bits industry". People in their homes will have the world at their fingertips on flat screens.

And in this context, Jean-Francois Richard makes a pointed observation, which is worth mentioning here:

While the transformation revolution is still in its infancy, two features clearly indicate its future potency:

First, whereas the industrial revolution transformed our understanding of human capacity in relation to energy and matter, the information technology is transforming our understanding of human capacity in relation to time and distance.

Second, the faster and more pervasive flow of information across the planet suggests that knowledge and information are destined to constitute a more important production factor than labor, raw materials, or capital.

... 10

Yet again, e-media is revolutionizing business practices, and they promise a crucial, social revolution in the future.

The following five components illustrate the impact of e-media and technological transformations:

1. Accelerated, leaner, and more standardized business processes.
2. Increasingly complex transnational business alliances.
3. Hypercompetitive purchasing worldwide.
4. Borderless capital flows.
5. Soaring international trade in services.

As such across the business world, employees from engineers to office workers are creating their own home pages and sharing details of their projects with the rest of the company.

Incidentally, e-media revolution and technological transformation are happening with amazing speed.

Just as the simple act of putting millions of computers around the world on speaking terms fomented the Internet revolution, connecting all the islands of information in a corporation via an intranet is sparking unprecedented collaboration.

The intranet has broken down the walls within corporations. Furthermore, intranet is used extensively across the world in the production and transmission of live-actions, films, music, TV shows, and freshest updates.

As e-media and technology revolutionize business, the same occurs in society as a whole, changing the way people work, learn, organize, and even shop.

The following five areas indicate the growing impact of e-media and technology:

1. The advent of teleworking on a large scale. Recent studies estimate that fifteen to twenty per cent of the workforce teleworking or telecommuting.
2. Education as a tradable commodity. One of the most exciting products of the e-media revolution and information technology transformation is the ability to offer lifelong education to anyone, at low cost, on almost any subject through CD-ROMs, interactive multimedia systems, and teleconferencing. Many Universities exist on the Internet.

3. Teleshopping. In future electronic and interactive catalogue shopping will increase the trend toward interactive bidding, hyper-competitive purchasing and transform jobs in wholesaling, retailing, and procurement.
4. The advent of paperless electronic money systems. In fact, e-media has left a major impact on the work of banks and financial institutions.
5. A revolution in human organization. It is because of e-media that organizations and governments abandon their prevailing command-and-control structures and are turning into more fluid and decentralized systems.

Yet again, e-media results in information that is useful in fighting poverty, ignorance, and deadly diseases such as cancer and AIDS.

Moreover, it is through e-media the major problem of the pressing environmental remediation and management needs are addressed. In other words there is better environmental monitoring and management through e-media.

Furthermore, e-media reduces the isolation of the individuals, families, communities, and nations.

Incidentally, the valid argument of Jean-Francois Rischard makes a pointed observation, which is worth mentioning here, and the statement runs thus:

Countries cannot work only on the supply-side of information infrastructure, they also have to invest heavily on the demand-side; in areas such as education, technical literacy, and computer literacy. Even more generally, they have to look at their overall ability to become "learning nations." Populations must be systematically mobilized to reach out, "get connected," and develop an interest (even an obsession) in lifelong learning. . . .

Thus, it is conclusively established that the impact of e-media is global and far reaching and that e-media is an inevitable and indispensable source of information.

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4. James, William. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
5. Kalam, Abdul, A P J. *Wings of Fire*, 1999, p. 38.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
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9. *Ibid.*, p. 173.
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