

Digital Divide-Ethical Considerations

D Ananthpadmanaban*

Associate Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Sri Siva Subramaniya Nadar College of Engineering, Kalavakkam-603110, India

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***Corresponding author:** D Ananthpadmanaban, Associate Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Sri Siva Subramaniya Nadar College of Engineering, Kalavakkam-603110, India

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Opinion

Technologically, the world is moving rapidly into the digital realm. Artificial Intelligence has penetrated into all aspects of life. It is possible to predict solutions to complex Engineering problems with the help of advanced software tools, but still these products are costly and available to only the elite or at the most to upper middle class.

There is a concern that this trend is giving rise to job shifts, job displacements and newer trends in jobs. Industry 4.0 is now alive and kicking and robots are replacing humans in many laborious and repetitive works. This may give mankind the time and energy to think about higher aspects of life and may also lead to more innovative jobs in future. For example-Faculty may become mentors and Engineers may become technology solvers.

As has happened with any major new shift in technology, this shift that is happening is also coming with initial resistance, fear and reluctance to embrace. It is felt that older technologies should be allowed to flourish with newer technologies, side by side and customers can choose what technology they want. Any new technology doesn't automatically mean a shift to better way or standards of life. Better comforts and availability of gadgets at the tip of your fingers is on one side making things convenient, but on the other side making us lazy as well. Gone are the days when you labored for a year or two for a solution hard for a practical solution and were involved in each step of the labor.

As a person who belongs to the older generation, who are more used to doing things the hard way, I feel that for the privileged few technology is coming too easily and for some sections of society it has not been able to percolate downwards. Rural connectivity is a must and entry of Electric vehicles should be very gradual. Otherwise, nature may revolt in innovative ways not seen in a less exploitative world. A feeling of caring and sharing should also be developed side by side along with technological advancements. If this does not happen, man is bound to become more and more selfish and would keep the benefits of technological developments to a select few.

COVID has taught us in a harsh way that whatever happens anywhere in the globe has repercussions everywhere else in the globe and many times disasters are our best teachers. Hence, we should collectively learn from our past mistakes of one upmanship and try to build a new world order where everyone cooperates with each other to bring about a unified global order. While we cannot dispense with might is right fully, the mighty in terms of technology should be made to understand that the weaker sections of the society are also equally part of the new global order.

Newer cooperation between the West and the East can be a game changer in future with the systematic ways of the west being blended with the mystic, ancient technologies of the East. This will give a new set of technologies which make use of both in an effective manner.

Hybrid technologies, hybrid learning and even hybrid modes of life are already being encountered in the world and may become the norm in future. Technological innovations are inevitable, but they should be done with more concern for nature and less harm to our fragile environment.

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