

Media Manipulation as a Psychological Warfare in George Orwell's *1984*

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Abstract

The growth of technology has given the viability to media, which has emerged as 'the third eye for humans to comprehend the world. The people are too dependent on these technologies, where they have forgotten their real nature of life. Because of global surveillance, technology has become a double-edged sword, where individual privacy is been lost. Moreover, people have exchanged their precious gift of freedom for the technology, which has become the manacle that restrains them to the core these days. The media is used as a tool to manipulate the thought process of the people in this digital era. The politicians are using these strings to make the people as the puppets, they induce the thought within people and restrict them from thinking beyond. This paper attempts to study the effects of Global surveillance and Media manipulation through George Orwell's 1984.

Keywords: Global surveillance, media manipulation, thoughts, psychology

These programs were never about terrorism: they're about economic spying, social control, and diplomatic manipulation. They're about power

— Edward Snowden

George Orwell's *1984* is considered to be a prophetic incantation which explicitly visualises the current political, media-centred world. The novel transcends the time and foresees the technology-centred world even in its mid-twentieth century. Orwell's profound political wisdom and literary knowledge have made this work as an eternal classic. His definite use of symbols and the distinct mark of real-life ideologies have created this as an entrancing work of art. The major prognostications of Orwell have come true in the proceedings of the time. In the twenty-first century, people are living a monitored life where privacy is at stake. The current scenario befits to the novel, it reflects the political and social despotism of the contemporary period.

The growth of technology has given the viability to media which has emerged as 'the third eye of humans to comprehend the world. The materialisation of the information has transformed the media as the dictators of daily affairs. They domineer the information and use this medium as a tool to manipulate the people. Mainly for the political and economic reasons, the people are exploited psychologically without their knowledge. Because of the development of technology, people are connected closely in the virtual world where they see things in a way how the information is presented to them. Most of the time, the people blindly believes what the media manifests. They fail to scrutinise the facts and they are living in a state of logical fallacy. The political parties and the media are using this oblivious nature of people as their advantage to deviate them from the truth and they command their thoughts in their favourite way. Though this novel belongs to the post-war era, it has dealt with the cruelty of ineffectual totalitarian government. It has proposed the truth about restricted freedom in the near future.

The novel unfolds on a bright cold day in April, where the protagonist Winston Smith introduces his abode and the socio-political environment in which he lives. He gives a vivid description of both the physical and mental environment in which he lives. He introduces the term 'BIG BROTHER'. "BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU,"(2), the very famous symbol created by Orwell to satirise predominant political figures of his age. Later, it was instituted mainly for an uprising powerful Nation, presumably USA. The term 'BIG BROTHER' represents superiority and dominance, which has become the characteristic qualities of a few powerful nations. Philip K Dick states that

There are no private lives. This most important aspect of modern life. One of the biggest transformations we have seen in our society is the diminution of the sphere of the private.

We must reasonably now all regard the fact that there are no secrets and nothing is private. Everything is public. (Web)

The above-mentioned line distinctly explains the loss of individual privacy in the modern era. The American writer Philip K Dick has rightly pointed out the restricted privacy that which leads to the public-private space. The uprising countries are being monitored by the dominant nations to restrain their growth and to maintain their dominance over the other. Every country surveillances the activities of its people in the name of defence mechanism. Because of the emerging technology and social media, this monitoring digs deep into the roots of individual privacy and restrains the personal space to the core.

Winston was disconsolate with the government and the law. The government was self-centred and power-thirsty. They are imposing their dominance over the people and monitoring every individual in society. The telescreen is an instrument like television, which is used to monitor the people in the novel. "Asleep or awake, working or eating, indoor or outdoor, in the bath or bed- no escape. Nothing was your own except the few cubic centimetres inside your skull."(26). The telescreen reminds us of the mobile phones which the people of the present generation are using; they are carrying their mobile phones, like a slave who carries his manacle, without knowing that it is the symbol of their slavery. Global surveillance is the biggest threat to individual privacy, in the name of surveillance some governments are controlling the society and they are using the media as a tool for manipulation.

Winston works in the Ministry of Truth, which deals with the news, entertainment and fine art. He has to proofread the documents and preparing the speeches for the 'hate week'. Since he is part of the public relation and communication, he could sense the mistakes that are happening around him. His search for truth had led him to O'Brien, whom he thought was one of the allies but turns out to be thought police.

In this digitalized world, branding has become a strategy to idealize the political leaders and the party in the minds of the people. It is a psychological method to induce the image of leaders or the ideas that which they propagate. “Even from the coins the eyes pursued you. On coins, on stamps, on the covers of books, on banners, on posters, and the wrapping of a cigarette packet-everywhere.”(26). They are using the media and displayed communication like posters, banners to pervade the minds. They are creating the hero and villains by persuading the minds. ‘BIG BROTHER’ is one such brand in this novel. Media has a mammoth role in the implementation of this method. People are becoming irrationally rational; they are finding the logic in fallacy.

“WAR IS PEACE; FREEDOM IS SLAVER; IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH” (26). These lines are the manifestation of the INGSOC in the novel. They clearly explain the motto of the party and they are catchy. Language is a powerful tool which is used to twist and turn, invoke and invade minds. Throughout the ages, great speakers have influenced young minds only through their words. That is why, when someone expresses their ideas, they have to be over-fastidious on words. These chosen words will imbibe into the minds and it creates positive imaging of someone. Likewise in ‘Newspeak’, they are manipulating the meanings of words, the psychology states that the usage of words will express the mental state and the intention of oneself. The usage of the words in media does have a huge impact on the minds of the people.

The party intends to persist forever in power. That is why, they use their Newspaper ‘Newspeak’ to project themselves as the saviours, and their words as the dogma. The politician is using the print and the electronic media’s to immortalize themselves, Winston says, “The sacred principles of Ingsoc. Newspeak, doublethink, the mutability of the past.”(26). The media is influential in recreating the past. When a government comes to rule it redesigns the history and leaves it traces as the shreds of evidence. Media becomes a piece of evidence in the process and affirms the need of the political parties. To keep the people out of all these changes, they create social confusions like communal riots and bombing, but they blamed the opponent party. Instead of gaining fame through planning and prosperity, politicians are trying to become famous by defaming others. Social media also wants that sort of news to attract people.

Social influence includes brandishing anger among the people, to keep the people in abomination, they conduct Two Minutes Hate in the novel, where the extremist Goldstein is projected as the evil of the society.

Before the Hate had proceeded for thirty seconds, uncontrollable exclamations of rage were breaking out from half the people in the room. The self-satisfied sheeplike face on the screen, and the terrifying power of Eurasian Army were too much to be borne; besides, the sight or even the thought of Goldstein produced fear and anger automatically. (13)

The media is using the opposite political party leaders as the figure of mockery, and they use such technics to aggravate the people and to unite them all as a crowd, to divert their attention. Through the effective use of words and the false accusation, politicians influence the mind of the common people so easily, the rage that which they have in their heart makes them dependent and weak. The party becomes the only reliable source for the people, they start to believe that the big brother is their only saviour. They create such emotional dependency through media.

Media in these days has become a reliable source for the deviation of the people. They could shift the thought process of the people through manipulating information, where they could make a cat into a tiger, and a tiger into a cat. Jacques Ellul in Propaganda: The Formation of Men’s Attitudes, states that public can express their opinions only through the channels given by the media, without which there won’t be any contemplation regarding the ongoing problems. The people have lost their sense of identifying the truth, moreover the media is confusing them through different arguments.

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The thrust for the power and money has changed the life of the people, where because of the materialistic thought process human behaviours are constantly changing towards the money, the morality is losing its value in these days. The human relationship, work ethics, love, friendship, fame, faith all these things run within the cutting edges of the materialist manipulated world. The media is pushing everyone to walk on the edge of a knife, where people forgets that they have a chance for breaking these bonds. But still, because of the societal influence, they adapt to this kind of oppression. Even if they don't like that kind of a lifestyle, they live it for others. The class structure and the societal influence keeps them in the centre of the society which is like a spider web, where they are been treated as baits and insects in the digital era. Thus, because of the media and global surveillance, individual freedom is been restrained and the privacy is at stake.

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