

# Essay on Computer: A Boon or a Bane

*"Computer is not a magical device. It possesses no I.Q. or intelligence of its own. Its I.Q. is zero. It has to be told what to perform and in what sequence. Hence only the user can determine what task a computer will perform. A computer can't take any decision on its own until it is programmed to do so. These are some mechanical deficiencies of the computers, but in addition to these technical flaws, the invention of the computer has adversely affected the human function, the social-economic fabric of the nations."*

Today hardly any corner of our life is left unaffected by computers. In schools, banks, shops, hospitals, restaurants, post offices, government offices, railway or bus reservation counters, travel companies, and all such utility service departments, we find the computers working everywhere.

For the last two decades, the world seems to have undergone a computer revolution. Initially, computers were designed to solve complicated scientific problems, but nowadays, computers are becoming indispensable day-by-day. Necessity is the mother of invention, the saying holds for computers, as it was initially invented for fast and accurate calculations. The word computer comes from the word "Compute", that means to calculate. So a computer was normally considered to be a calculating device that can perform arithmetic calculations at an enormous speed and with perfect accuracy. But nowadays more than 80% of the work done by computers is of non-mathematical or non-numerical nature. Hence to define a computer as merely a calculating machine does not hold good in present-day situations. To be correct and more precise, a computer may be defined as a device that operates upon information or data. The fact that computers process data is so fundamental that many people have started calling it a data processor. The name data

processor is more comprehensive as it covers not only the computing work but also performs other functions with the data like processing, merging, sorting, printing, etc.

Today the computer has become the cornerstone of our industrial and scientific development. The computers have shrunk the world into a room. In all walks of life from the manufacturing of a small item, to the exploration of the ocean and space, computers are being used extensively. Robots are being used in the study of volcanoes in space research, in medical science, remotely commanded by computers. This omnipotent device has taken entry into such diverse areas as sports, agriculture, medicine, business, space, an ocean that has become an indispensable gadget.

## Is the computer a boon or a bane?

No works of art or any great scripture or the Shakespearean tragedies have had so spasmodic effect on human society than the computer, making the present world totally dependant on it. Rightly said by someone that since the existence of humans on earth, it has never encountered anything as complex and ingeniously designed, as a computer. "A computer is a person, unable to walk, but its mind transcends the barriers of space", retorted Dr. Stephen. It is indeed an example of the excellence of the human mind, which had done wonders and made the creator himself slave to a great extent.

## Characteristics of Computers:

**SPEED:-** Computer is such a fast working device, that can perform in records the amount of work that a human being can't think of doing it manually. A computer does in one minute, what a man cannot even imagine. A powerful computer is capable of performing about 3 to 4 million simple arithmetic operations per second. While talking about

the speed of a computer, the unit of speed is not the seconds or milliseconds but microseconds ( $10^{-6}$ ) or nanoseconds ( $10^{-9}$ ) or the picoseconds ( $10^{-12}$ ).

**ACCURACY:-** The accuracy of the computers is unparalleled or unchallengeable. Each calculation is performed with the same accuracy. Errors may occur in a computer, but errors are not due to wrong calculations are done by the computer but due to wrong instructions given by the user.

**DILIGENCE:-** Unlike human beings, a computer is totally free from monotony, tiredness, lack of concentration, boredom, etc. So a computer can work regularly, for any longer period of time, without creating any error and without feeling boredom or monotonousness. Due to this characteristic, a computer surely scores over human beings in doing routine jobs with accuracy and speed. What a man or any good number of persons can't do in years altogether with such accuracy and without getting bore, can be done by a computer in minutes.

**VERSATILITY:-** Versatility is one of the most wonderful characteristics of a computer. At one moment it is preparing electricity bills the next moment it can generate the result of the university and the next moment it can trace an important file. All that is required to give appropriate instruction to the computer. A computer is capable of performing almost any task without getting irritated, provided the task should be reduced to a series of logical steps.

**MEMORY:-** As soon as a human being acquires new knowledge, the brain subconsciously selects what he feels to be important and worth retaining in his memory and relegates unimportant details to the back of the mind or just thrown that out of memory. While such is not a case with computers. It can store and recall any amount of

information because of its secondary storage capability. Every piece of information can be retained as long as desired by the user and can be recalled as and when required. Even after several years, the information recalled will be as accurate as on the day it was fed into the computer.

With such important and wonderful characteristics, computers have ushered in all aspects of business, science, research, and the daily routine of a man. Sitting here one can communicate with one's kith and kin sitting millions of miles away. A computer is regarded as a work of its own and within. The most complicated medical operations, the most complex scientific calculations, have become very easy with the invention of computers. The discovery of new planets, stars, man's approach to Saturn, Mars, Moon, and exploration of hitherto hidden secrets of space, has become possible with the help of computers.

Shortcomings: But every invention has its merits and demerits, and so the computer is no exception. A computer is a device having no feelings. It is devoid of emotions and instincts as it is simply a machine, has no soul or heart. The computer can't make any judgment on its own. The judge Element is based on the instructions given to it by the user. Although man has succeeded in building a memory for the computer no computer possesses the equivalent of a human heart. A computer can't judge the good or bad effects of its decision.

Moreover, the computer is not a magical device. It processes no I.Q. or intelligence of its own. Its I.Q. is zero. It has to be told what to perform and in what sequence. Hence only the user can determine what task a computer will perform. A computer can't take any decision on its own unless it is programmed to do so. These are some mechanical deficiencies of the computers, but in addition to these technical flaws, the invention of the computer has adversely affected

human life, the social-economic fabric of the nations.

As already mentioned. a computer can perform the work with such accuracy and speed any person can't perform even in years. The problem of unemployment faced by so many countries including India is further worsened by the use of computers in various offices and departments where one side the requirement of manpower is decreased with the use computers, the IT industry has generated a good number of employment opportunities on the other.

The invention of nuclear weapons, most destructive in nature, warships, space ships have been made possible with the invention of computers. Had there been no computers, the world of today would not have been at the climax of destruction. The push of one button can destroy any country and is sufficient to destroy millions and billions of innocent people. Today the so-called developed countries are using computers, busy inventing newer technology of modern warfare. The use of missiles, dropping of nuclear bombs, destroying the basic amenities, the communication system of any nation has become so easy that they have started using them for the aggrandizement of their imperialistic motives.

Yes, indeed, the computers on the one side helped mankind to solve many crucial problems, on the other side, it has put the world on the verge of destruction. Despite that, it is not at all the fault of the computers themselves. It is a machine that obeys the orders of the user, therefore, the fault lies with the user, not with the computers.

Summarily computers have solved the most challenging problems like energy crisis, cancer research, water purification, and helped man to explore space, ocean, and other hidden secrets of the universe. The computer is a boon or a bane depends, on its use. If used for the

benefits of mankind it is a boon, if used for the evil purpose. it is a bane. Remember the story of *Alladin and genie*, *genie obeys the order of Alladin, whether wrong or right, good or bad, in the same way, the computer obeys the orders and instructions of its user.*