

The Metaverse

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A few years ago, before the pandemic, not many people had the vision of remote work and studies. Distance courses and online degrees were a concept back then, but no one ever thought it could become the new normal. And here we are today, living in the online world 24/7, getting graduated online, doing our jobs online, even getting married online! This massive paradigm shift in our lives has paved the way to a new buzzword in the technology world – the Metaverse.

The Metaverse is a new approach to our interaction with the internet. While we have been able to carry on with our work online thanks to social media and video chat applications, there's still something missing. The vision behind Metaverse is to fill up that 'something missing' and try to bring the internet closer to reality. The Metaverse promises to create an immersive virtual world where everyone can create their avatar, earn digital currency, and even buy stuff with that currency.



A schematic of the Metaverse

To get a better hang of the Metaverse, replace 'Metaverse' with the term 'Cyberspace' whenever you read it somewhere. Most of the time, the essential meaning of the sentence won't change with this replacement because Metaverse is just a new way of interacting with the internet.

Metaverse is not just a concept. It is already real! Games such as World of Warcraft and Fortnite allow players not just to play the game but buy and sell goods, interact with other players, and perform different activities that we do in everyday life. Just put on a VR headset, and you are good to go!



Fortnite (left) and World of Warcraft (right)

Unfortunately, that's not the truth. Calling these games 'Independent Metaverses' is like calling Google the internet. Google has a huge role in developing and maintaining the internet, but that doesn't make Google the internet. Similarly, companies such as Epic Games that develop games like Fortnite are just developing small parts of the Metaverse.

Other than online avatars, the Metaverse talks about holograms, life-like real-time 3D images of human beings at a physical location thousands of miles away from them. We've already seen such holograms in God knows how many Hollywood Sci-Fi movies. The Metaverse kindles the possibility of bringing such holograms to life. Two best friends who live on opposite sides of the world can go to a concert together; one friend is physically present, while the other is present in the form of a hologram. Doesn't it sound amazing?



Tony Stark's holographic image post his death in Avengers Endgame (2019)

The Metaverse is currently at the premature stage the internet was in the 1970s and early 1980s. However, it is growing very fast. On 28th October 2021, Facebook was rebranded as Meta to mark the entry of the former social media company into the Metaverse world. To quote Mark Zuckerberg, "We believe the Metaverse will be the successor to the mobile internet. We'll be able to feel present – like we're right there with people no matter how far apart we actually are." Apart from Meta, Microsoft has also shown interest in working on the Metaverse. Even Nvidia and Unity are working towards bringing the Metaverse to life.



Meta (October 2021)

Technology is growing rapidly, and with the pandemic looming on our heads round the clock, it is hard to say if we'd ever get our normal lives back. The Metaverse is our best hope, rather our only hope during these times of social distancing.