

# The emerging power of Social Media:

## Prospects and Problems. (CSS-18)

### Outline:

Social media emergence has been fueled by fast internet connectivity coupled with the launch of various social media sites which have made social media more powerful. However, emergence of social media has come up with plethora of prospects as well as challenges. Therefore, it is imperative to devise a regulatory intervention mechanism for controlling social media menace; elevating its potential prospects for the benefit of humanity.

(I) Introduction

(II) Emerging power of Social-Media: An Overview

(III) Illustration of Prospects of Social-Media

(A) Access to information and education

(B) Amplification of movements and voices of marginalized groups  
case in point: MeToo and Blacklivesmatter movements have **been** amplified by social media.

(C) Enhanced global communication and connections

(D) Social media provides platforms for self-expression and creativity

(IV) Manifestation of problems associated with Social Media

(A) Cyberbullying and online harassment

case in point: In US 56 percent middle and high school students have been cyberbullied at some point of their lives

(B) Spread of misinformation and disinformation

(C) Addiction and excessive use of social media

case study: There are 87.5 million internet users in Pakistan and average population spends 2 hour on social media

(D) Social media as a potential source of manipulation and propaganda.

case study: India is spying Pakistanis through social media.

(V) How to elevate social media's potential prospects and alleviate its grave problems

(A) Government's regulatory interventions can act as bulwark against menace of social media

case in point: To protect its citizens, Germany enacted a law named as The Network Enforcement Act, or NetzDG.

(B) Social media institutions should be liable and responsible

case in point: Facebook feature of targeted audience is a key source of misinformation.

(C) Role of international community is also important in order to add friction against sundripled social media.

(vi) Conclusion

"There is no such thing as  
social media, there is only  
media."

This doesn't match your stance  
Be neutral and optimistic in your  
conclusion

~ Abhijit Alaskar

"Social media is both dark and brilliant thing for mental health, Fearne Cotton said. With the emergence of fast internet connectivity, social media has got a renewed vigour and has revolutionised the concept of media. As of now, the global village is proverbially just one click away. Social media has become a potential means to access information and education. Moreover, social media has greatly amplified various movements and voices of marginalized groups across the world. Additionally, social media has immensely enhanced global communication and has also buttressed connections among masses. Now social media is not restricted to just information outlets, but provides unprecedented platforms for self-expression and creativity, including TikTok, YouTube and Facebook. However, these perceived benefits are frequently accompanied by concerns about the limitation of technology as a tool for political action or information seeking. These concerns include, cyberbullying and harassment, spread of misinformation and disinformation, excessive use and addiction of social media, and misuse of social media against masses to manipulate them and compelling them to be a part of malicious propaganda. Therefore, it has become imperative to regulate social media in a best possible way in order to overcome its possible negative consequences, and also elevate its potential prospects for the betterment of the society. For this, social networks should be required to release details of algorithms to trusted

researchers, in order for the technology to be vetted; added friction to online sharing, to prevent the rampant spread of misinformation and disinformation. Moreover, governments should enact laws and inculcate in legislation that how to regulate social media. Awareness and digital education can also be a potential source to regulate unbridled social media.

Social media is a form of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content. After 1969, with the emergence of the Advanced Research Agency Network, social media got popularity among masses. Then emergence of social media has been fueled by the human impulse to communicate, by advances in digital technology and evolution of fast internet connectivity. Moreover, after the incident of September 11, 2001, social media got enormous attentions worldwide. The launch of social sites like LinkedIn in 2002, Myspace launched in 2003, Facebook in 2008 and Google in 2012, revolutionized social media. In today's world, modern social media outlets, including Whatsapp, TikTok, Zoom, and Youtube, have dominated the society. Hence, social media has emerged at unprecedented levels. According to the Pew Research Centre, in US 72% percent adults use some form of social media. In 2005, that number was 5 percent.

To begin with, social media has made access of people to information and valuable education easy and comfortable. Now it has become very easy to get information about world affairs and domestic affairs through social media. Adding more, social media has played astonishing role in making education accessible for all regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds. For example, during COVID-19 social media has played a crucial role and assisted people in multiple ways. Various social media sites which include Youtube, whatsapp and Facebook have become a source of getting information and education as well. Hence, social media has become hub of information and providing opportunities to get education.

Moreover, social media not only provides information and education but also amplify various movements worldwide and voices of downtrodden and marginalized groups. It has become a powerful tool against powerful elites who have been oppressing and abusing lower classes for decades. For instance, movements like MeToo and Blacklivesmatter are becoming popular because of social media. Not only this, voices of marginalized people as Palestinians are resonating at international forum because of social media. Social media is mounting pressure on international communities to take actions and protect rights of marginalized groups.

Besides, communication and connections have enhanced with the emergence of social media. In old times, it was arduous to communicate with peers living far from one's area. It took weeks even months to send a simple message. In today's world, there are innumerable social media sites available through which people can communicate and connect with masses. Therefore, it has become feasible in this globalised world to trade with others worldwide. Gradually, social media is shaping communication and connections of people.

Additionally, as communication and connections have been enhanced globally, social media provide various platforms to people for expressing themselves and amusing other social media users with their creative skills. People express their opinions, criticise government's malfunctioning and lauding positive stances of state. Platforms like Facebook and Youtube provide immense opportunities to showcase creativity. Hence, people are actively using social media platforms in order to express themselves and showcase creativity.

Along with potential prospects of social media, there are multifaceted problems as well. One of the problems is cyberbullying and online harassment. Social media users are vulnerable to cyberbullying and online harassment. As the Cyberbullying Institute

reported in its report, in US 36 percent students in middle and high school cyberbullied at some point in their life, with 30 percent having been victimized twice or more. Moreover, harassment is another problem people face with on social media. Hackers and other social media experts use malign ways to breach people's privacy and harass them by stealing their pictures or other personal data. Such illicit practices cause psychological and mental unrest. Today, it has become a norm to get a news regarding cyberbullying and online harassment.

Another grave problem pertaining to social media is spread of misinformation and disinformation. As misinformation means that, unknowingly sharing of an unauthentic piece of news or information; disinformation means that deliberately sharing false and unauthentic piece of information in order to cause chaos among masses. In past, there was no proper mechanism of fact-checker and people shared false information without knowing the ultimate consequences. As a result, people who receive false information make their minds accordingly without confirming authenticity of information. Therefore, frictionless social media will remain a possible potential source of spreading misinformation and disinformation, if it remains unregulated.

Adding more to it, excessive use of social media has made people addict of it. People around the world, especially young generation spend unlimited time using social media. They play games and watch videos which appease and amuse them. As reported by Pew Research Centre, 74 percent of adults in US spend time on social media. Another report was reported that, in Pakistan there are 87.5 million social media users who spend 2 hour an average time using social media. Resultantly, these reports are showcasing grim picture of society. People completely rely so ~~rather~~ media for their activities, for this they use it excessively.

When people use social media excessively then they possibly fall prey to social media's manipulation and propaganda. Different states and non-state actors use social media to influence other people's lives. For the procurement of desired results they run malicious campaigns and propagandas in order to manipulate people and then use them for their own purposes. As reported by The New York Times in 2020, in an article titled "India Accused of Spying on Pakistanis using Fake Social Media Accounts," this shows that how social media can be a major source of manipulation and can serve to different obnoxious propagandas. Hence, this can cause harm to others



Therefore, it has become mandatory for states to regulate social media in a best possible manner in order to diminish its brunts and elevate its potential prospects. For achieving this goal, government's role could be vital. Governments should enact regulatory laws for social media and give powers to the law enforcement agencies to monitor social media and related activities. Moreover, one of the most significant regulatory developments has occurred in Germany in the form of the Network Enforcement Act, or NetzDG, a law that imposes content liabilities on categories of social media services. Hence, government's regulatory interventions are very important to overcome menace of social media.

In this regard, making social media institutions responsible is imperative. There is need to have checks and balances system for social media institutions. Currently, platforms like Facebook allow advertisers to target their audience according to their age, gender, interest and location. By enabling such irresponsible features platforms shape the overall outlook of users and allow for the dissemination of misinformation to be well-targeted. Therefore, such features need to be curtailed through checks and balances and through comprehensive regulation which prohibit it overall; make institutions liable and more responsible.

Moreover, an international regulatory mechanism can also be a bulwark against menace of social media. Therefore, it is appropriate to argue for a harmonised international regulatory response enforceable in domestic courts. Social media platforms have significant economic power and a transnational user base. They play a significant role in politics and influence culture through the spread of information and ideas. Therefore, it is appropriate to respond to the dangers it poses through an international mechanism. It could ensure universal access to information and potentially reduce problems associated with platforms manipulation.

To conclude, social media emergence became possible ~~because~~ due to evolution of fast internet connectivity coupled with launch of various social media sites, including Facebook, Myspace, YouTube, Whatsapp and Instagram. Where social media has provided people with a lot of information and opportunities to gain education, it has also provide platforms to raise voices against suppression and assisted marginalized groups in making their movements successful. Social media has also changed global communication and connections ~~day~~ revolutionising social media platforms. Now people can easily interact with others all over the world with no time. Moreover, people also express-themselves and amaze other with their creativity through social media.

DATE: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

However,

As Abhijit Naskar rightly said, "There is no such thing as social media, there is only unsocial media". There are some problems associated with social media. These problems include, cyberbullying and harassment, dissemination of false information, and even people use it excessively which harm them mentally and psychologically. Moreover, social media can also be used to inject malicious propaganda into society in order to harm others. Therefore, regulation of social media has become very important for developed and also for developing states. In order to add friction against social media rampant, following regulatory mechanisms are essential to be taken under consideration. Firstly, government's regulatory interventions is crucial where government has to enact regulatory laws and monitor social media platforms. Secondly, to overcome problems associated with social media, it is need of hour to make social media institutions more liable and responsible. An international regulatory intervention is also appropriate to regulate social media. As Elon Musk, CEO of X, rightly said, "I think there should be regulations on social media to the degree that it negatively affects the public good."

Recommendations should not be added in concluding paragraph