

Essay: We live in the Info age,
yet we love our ignorance

Outline

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h) Rise in conspiracy theories and uncertainty

(5) Information age is polarizing societies:

a) People consume information that aligns with their ideologies and beliefs

b) Social media creates echochambers that reinforce existing beliefs without exposing to contradictory ideas

c) Strong culture of political liberalism takes birth

d) Opponents are not considered as rivals but enemies to vanquish in a war

e) Sensational and biased media adds fuel to the fire of polarization by promoting polarized content

f) Megalomaniac leaders seek self interest over public interest by capitalizing on rhetoric

g) Non-state actors or extremist group advance their ideologies and potential recruitment centres through digital media

(6) Implications of uncontrolled information age on state and society

a) Erosion of public trust and democratic retreat

b) Rise in authoritarianism

- c) Disintegration of society and social chaos
- d) Intellectual paralysis and subsequent downfall

⑦ How to carve the way out of ignorance in the information age:

a) Introducing free and independent fact check organizations to limit unnecessary information glut

choice of words is mature

b) Imparting critical thinking skills in students by reforming traditional pedagogy in schools educational institutions

c) Embracing diversity, conflicting ideologies and opposing views to foster a progressive society

d) Encouraging objective journalism and vibrant role of media as a watchdog

⑧ Conclusion

In an era defined by unprecedented connectivity, people find themselves more disconnected than ever. This is the bitter sweet reality of post modern truth era, where everything is just a click away. From checking weather, locations and the finding a near-by tasty restaurants, every kind of information is right at the corner of street. The excessive information is followed by high confusions, where the ability to distinguish between what is relevant and what is not fades away. Therefore, one can rightly term the information age as a necessary evil, advancing merits and demerits simultaneously. One of the pivotal aspects of information age is information glut, where the information is uncontrolled and unchecked, thriving the culture of misinformation, disinformation and propaganda. Unfortunately, in this age, people's ability to reason, engage in critical discourses and creativity ^{Have sharply diminished} diminishes. Thus, they fall into the pit of the disaster of ignorance. They are constantly entangled and overwhelmed over the excessive availability of information and become confused all over the place. Jean Baudrillard, a well-known French philosopher, gave philosophy of simulation and simulacra that explicates the confusion between reality and fiction in the age of information. Moreover, the excessive information creates an endless loop of confusions, information is no longer available in serious discourses, but infat & capitalized by media industry to serve their commercial purposes. In a similar vein, demagogues capitalize on information age which reinforces polarisation in the country, politicisation of media, misinfo and disinfo also take birth against the backdrop of information age.

To add more, erosion of mindfulness in people and rise in conspiracy theories are also the product of information age. All these prominent factors are the necessary corollary of information age. It polarizes the society in different ways. People start consuming information that aligns with their ideologies, social media become echochamber, strong culture of political tribalism take their birth. Moreover, opponents are considered as enemies, sensational media adds fuel to the polarization and megalomaniac leaders exploit people for their personal gains. Also, the extremist group advance their radical tendencies through social media to propagate, communicate and coordinate their actions. Thus, all these determinants altogether pose a serious toll on the underlying foundation of society and a state, fracturing them all. Some of the implications are erosion of public trust and democratic deficit, social disintegration and chaos and intellectual paralysis of youth and subsequent downfall. Given the challenges of information age, it is necessary to carve the way out of ignorance. With the right mix of measures like introducing independent fact-check organizations, imparting critical thinking skills in students, embracing conflicting and diverse ideologies and encouraging objective journalism and vibrant role of social media, a country can turn its challenges involving information age into a catalyst for progress and development. In this way, path to sound reasoning, critical thinking, mindfulness and clarity can be ensured in this uncertain age of mindless information glut.

In order to dwell deeper into information age and its adverse consequences that exacerbate ignorance, it is important to shed some light on the concept of post truth era. The post-truth age is basically a societal condition where the information is excessive often leading to confusions and uncertainty. As the freedom of speech, opinion and access to information are at the heart of democracy; therefore, the overwhelming availability of information leads to information glut. Conclusively, people lose their ability to distinguish between what is authentic and what is fake. The bitter reality of information age is erosion of critical thinking, mindfulness and rational discourse. Therefore, it is said that despite living in information age, people love their ignorance as they don't dare to think out of box. They become entangled in misinformation and disinformation, thus losing their power to come out of this vicious cycle. To be curt, ~~post truth age is more likely on ^{age} a world of propaganda and disinformation.~~

no need of this transition

~~Having explored the underlying concept of information age, it is important to move to the next logical step and that is analyzing how information age leads to ignorance.~~

To Begin with, Jean Baudrillard, a well known French philosopher, argues on information age by proposing a philosophy of simulation and simulacra. It contends that reality and fiction are the two

different sides of a coin, but unfortunately, with the information age, the line between the two has blurred significantly. In his philosophy, he argues that simulation are the first copy of reality as it mimicks the reality; whereas, simulacra is the copy of the copy, it ~~is the~~ does not exist anywhere. However, with the phase of hyperreality, the stage comes where the reality is completely replaced by these simulations and simulacra, undeniably and completely distorting the real world. His philosophy is a reminder of what happens when the lines between reality and fiction are blurred. ~~People become easily entangled in fiction with undetermined reasoning skills.~~

Similarly, another pivotal aspect of information age is an endless loop of confusions over the information glut. This overwhelming availability of knowledge on internet, social media and websites become a substantial cause of confusions, leading to ignorance of minds. In the age of information, every other piece of information seem extremely important and relevant. This reduces the ability of minds of people to organize the information and filter the unnecessary content, thereby, leading to the disorganized and irrelevant data gatherings. Neil Postman argues in his book ² 'Technopoly' that people instead of using the information are overwhelmingly all over the place with information glut, and thereby never dares to ~~over~~ filter the unnecessary content.

In the same manner, one of the pressing determinants of information age is the prevalence of entertainment culture. Information is no longer available in serious rational discourse and is packaged as entertainment. Neil Postman prudently outlines this concept in his book "Amusing yourself to death". He uses the term "Now---This" Syndrome, which depicts that news outlets are increasingly sensationalized. In order to grasp the attention of audience, they instantly changes one topic with the other, trivializing important issues. The news of poverty, disaster and politics are instantly followed by gossips on celebrities lifestyle and entertainment industry. This sensationalized role of media sets the stage for superficiality of knowledge and information among the audience. It erodes their ability to distinguish news of serious and trivial matters, leading to the ignorance of the audience. It would be suffice to say that the society has fallen prey to irrationality and undermined critical thinking due to the entertainment culture.

To add more, information age has paved the way for demagogues to capitalize on their rhetoric. They increasingly spread propaganda without any fear. As there is no proper culture of cross verification of the claims made by demagogues; therefore, such leaders make big futile and absurd claims without providing ample evidence, leading stalwarts to believe the absoluteness of such claims. One such

example of such incidence is the past 2020 presidential election tension in US. Trump had repeatedly made fact free claims on the potential rigging in 2020 presidential elections, leading people believe such claims and bad mouthing the democrats as crooked and corrupt political party. Thus, in this way, demagogue leaders exploit information and spread propaganda.

Likewise, another recent trend illustrating the consequences of information age is erosion of mindfulness in people. With the advent of entertainment and short reel culture, people are losing the grounds on critical thinking. Their attention span has reduced to 7 seconds, less than a bee. The result of which is erosion of mindfulness. People cannot concentrate on serious issues for a longer time because they are addicted to the rush of dopamine that follows watching the 7 second reel. Many psychologists and psychiatrists are writing extensively on this issue, as the unintended outcome of the information age. With the release of social media apps like TikTok, Instagram and ~~social~~ reddit, such condition of mind has been observed widely. Therefore, it would not be wrong to say that information age has eroded the critical thinking skill of people. People are ~~be~~ mindlessly scrolling on social media without any purpose of life.

By the same token, media has increasingly politicized in information age. The role of media is

no longer a responsible one. It has become biased, fragmented and intensely commercial. Yuval Noah Harari rightly argues in his book 21 lessons for the 21st century that media is reinforcing biases in society by catering to the taste of people. In order to earn millions of rupees, it is promoting content that presents a one side of picture. Moreover, in the information age, it has also become difficult to distinguish fact from opinion. The claim is evident in the report of the survey conducted by the New York University, in which most of the people upto 70% of American citizens agreed that news outlets have increasingly polarized, catering to one-sided views. Thus, it is now clear that ~~ignorance in information age could lead to expanded sensational role of media.~~

With the polarization of media, society becomes a breeding ground for misinformation and disinformation. People unquestioningly accept the narratives of their desired leaders without fact checking. Media also capitalizes on the ignorance of people and advance the false, absurd and illogical narratives of populist leaders with clickbait headings. A study revealed by the Reuters says that ^{only} 18% of Americans trust newspaper and news media outlets - a historic low. which implies that people are convinced of the fact that media is the source of misinformation and disinformation that leads to the distortion of reality. Unfortunately, most of the people uncritically accept the information and do not engage in rational discourse. Therefore,

Society becomes a breeding and fertile ground for the spread of false information.

Similarly, one of the other consequence of ignorance in information age is the rise in conspiracy theories. It is the tool of populists and demagogue leaders to deepen the faultlines of the society and to solve their political interests. One of the most scuttling heard conspiracy theory was of covid-19 vaccination. Most of the developing countries, mostly muslim countries widely believed that west is on the mission of installing surveillance chips in the body of muslims. Similarly, other notable conspiracy theory, which even west ^{advocates} is of rejection of anthropogenic nature of climate change. The withdrawal of Trump administration from the Paris agreement contends that global warming is over exaggeration of the 21st century, leading to the rise in conspiracy theories about the global warming. These conspiracy theories suggest that people are living in fools paradise and re-inforcing existing ideologies and beliefs without exposing themselves to the contradictory ideas. Thus, this ignorance of people in information age propels intellectual paralysis of a society.

keeping in perspective is

~~By keeping in view above causes of ignorance in~~ information age, it becomes clear that information glut ~~is the substantial~~ is the leading factor in driving mass confusions and uncertainty in people's lives. Therefore, it polarizes society in different ways. Firstly, it motivates people to consume information that aligns with their ideology

and beliefs. People discard information that does not satisfy their souls. By doing so, society becomes increasingly divided and polarized. It also leads to localism and nationalism as people believe only their views and ideals are superior and rest of the ideas are inferior. The fact is evident in the society of America, where FOX news cater to conservative and republican views; whereas, CNN is mostly consumed by democrats. Such behavior of people towards political ideologies intensify polarization in a society.

With one-sided exposure to information, strong culture of tribalism also materializes. The stalwarts of a particular political or ideological group defend their group with the strong force and suppress all the voices that tends to oppose them. In such tribalism culture, political opponents are not viewed as legitimate rivals but enemies to vanquish in a war. It polarizes society and creates a legislative impasse too. In such situations, stalwarts of both sides bombard their audience with one-sided directed facts, leading people to believe the absoluteness, truthfulness and moral superiority of their ideologies. A striking illustration of such situation can be found in Sudan war, where the supporters of Hamdan versus Bushan are in constant tug of war with both claiming their legitimacy over the domestic and global politics. Thus, it can be said that information age has led to polarization of societies by forming a culture of tribalism.

In a same manner, social media adds fuel to the fire of polarisation. It creates echo chambers, reinforcing existing ideas and beliefs. As a role of media is more of sensationalism than a serious critical rational discourse, the promotion of polarized content become a cornerstone for earn high ratings and profits. By doing so, social media and mass media polarizes a society. According to the study of MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), the content from the polarized sources receive higher engagement. It depicts that rising clickbait culture of news and media exacerbates polarization in a society.

By the same token, megalomaniac leaders intensify polarization by their rhetoric. They seek to advance self interest over public interest through selling their rhetoric with unreasonable claims. One of the most pivotal example of rhetoric of megalomaniac leadership and the subsequent violence is attack on capitol hill.

The people of US have stormed the building of capitol hill due to inciteful speeches of Donald Trump after 2020 presidential elections. Such incidence is a high proof of what happens when populist leaders capitalize on the information and rhetoric and fuels the fire of polarization in society. In other words, rampant ignorance of people over the inciteful claims of the leaders lead to polarization of society.

In a similar vein, non-state actors and extremist groups advance their ideologies through the social media. They exploit the unchecked system of information media and propagates, communicate and coordinate their actions through social media. Most of the time, non state actors capitalize on the disillusioned youth, who are facing the challenges of polarization and identity crisis. Most instrumental example of such terrorist group recruiting youth online is ISIS. It has become overwhelmingly sophisticated and hire people from all over the world. EU disinfo lab has reported the recruitment of ISIS from the developing countries, stricken by poverty. In this way, non-state actors fill the void by stepping in in this age of information and ubiquitous ignorance.

~~Just highlighting the challenges do not resolve these.~~

~~Only highlighting problems do not solve the problems.~~
 It is equally important to propose some measures to reverse the tide of prevailing ignorance in the information age. In order to carve the way out of ignorance, it is important to introduce the free and independent fact check organization that works transparently. In this way, unnecessary information can be reduced. Moreover, the fact check body will help in verification of the claims, facts and data used by leaders, government institutions and other media platforms. One of the most reliable fact check organization is factcheck.org funded by the university of pennsylvania. It is working independently in USA and is providing real time updates on the facts used by various state institutions. Such organizations will truly ensure

the narrowing down of meaningless information.

Similarly, reforming the education system by transferring the pedagogy style would strike much relief to the ignorance in this age of information. State should ensure inculcation of critical thinking and problem solving and reasoning skills in students. In this way, students from the very early age would learn to manoeuvre through the age of confusions and uncertainty. The best case study of such education system is of Japan and Finland, where early childhood education is designed in a way that promotes critical thinking in students. These models of education are celebrated in the whole world as a precedent of qualitative education. Hence, combating ignorance in the information age.

~~Another instrumental measure needed to lessen~~
~~ignorance in information age is fostering a culture of~~
~~institutional tolerance.~~ It implies that embracing diversity,
 conflicting ideologies and opposing view could significantly
 foster a progressive society. By taking opponents as
 legitimate rivals and considering the grievances of other
 groups, polarization in a society could be substantially
 reduced, which in turn, would lead to a culture of
 dialogue and cooperation. Levitsky in his book how
 democracy dies uses the term of institutional tolerance
 to describe the importance of tolerance in politics in
 order to reduce the divisions and distortion of
 reality.

Lastly, encouraging objective journalism will also help in lowering confusions related to information glut. The role of media should be promoted as an unbiased vibrant watchdog that oversees the government policies and its inadequacies. Moreover, objective journalism does not capitalize on one-sided facts and clickbait headlines. In fact, it promotes facts over opinions. Therefore, creating a way towards objective journalism would ensure legitimacy of all the information made available through the news outlets and social media. Ishtad Hussain in his book "Governing the Unpredictable" stressed on the importance of independent and free media to ensure progressive democracy, which will narrow down opinions into facts.

In a nutshell, the ignorance of people in this information is largely due to availability of the excessive information. People are entangled in the information and into an endless loop of confusion. The information age has paved a way for demagogues, populists and megalomaniacs while reading our whole essay reflect repetition of expression and repetition of ideas purpose of self interests over public interests, leading to the stark polarization of the society. People are increasingly relying on their leaders due to which culture of tribalism has once again resurfaced. The result of mass ignorance of people is multidimensional and led to the social disintegration of society. Therefore, in order to steer the way out of this crisis, effective measures should be taken like introducing independent fact check organizations, improving critical thinking skills, fostering tolerance and objective journalism. In this way, society will become critical, mindful and responsible.

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