

Essay

Society and Social media: A Reality check

In studying and understanding the role of the modern 21st century communication platforms which are popularly known as social media in shaping and conditioning of the society, we need to look back in the history of mankind to get a grasp of role played by the basic and de facto process of communication in building of the complex and sophisticated human society that we are living in this 21st century. The prima facie of the social media is the process of communication, so when defining the communication one can say that it is the process of transferring and receiving of the message which is composed of knowledge, information, emotions, etc. between the sender and receiver respectively. The definition may look simple but speaking in terms of scientific importance, every living organism on this planet requires communication for their survival and evolution, although the level of complexity of communication differs from one species to another, the basic purpose is to survive and it is ingrained in every living being. Standing out of the box, the human beings have evolved the most impressive, complex and sophisticated system of communication which makes us the most dominant species.

on the planet Earth.

According to the Aristotle, human being is a social animal i.e. he tends to form group with others like him, it may differ in size and composition which will eventually become a part of larger unit known as society. Right from the paleolithic age humans are socialising themselves as it was required for their survival through the adversaries of the mother nature. The earliest and simple form of communication was the rock paintings on the caves in which the early human were residing, later the ways the to communicate got evolved in integrity with the evolution of human beings, the manuscripts, inscriptions, art forms and many such other things. But the real breakthrough was the one when the communication was open to the masses and larger group rather than confined to a small peer group, it is the invention of mass media. First of such mass media was the print media, newspaper and with the advent of time the mass media evolved as like radio, photography, cinema, broadcasting digital media, advertising, etc. It led to the growth of humans on an exponential basis making it possible to connect at global level with more ease, deepening and cost effectively.

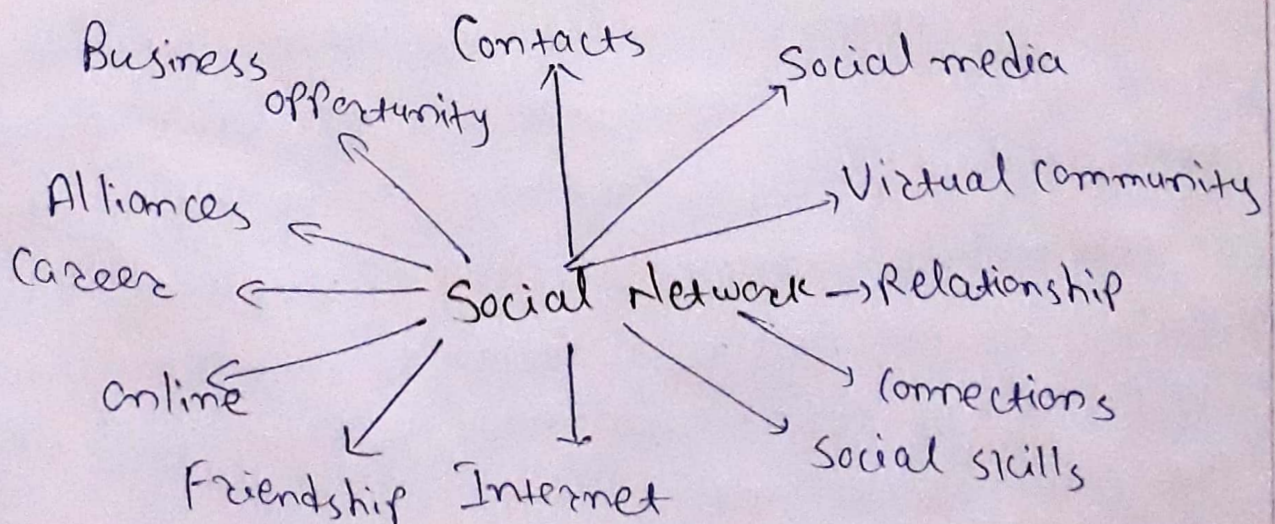
The nature of the human society is rigid and flexible at the same time over the component of its social morality which can be ethics or just confined to

the conglomerate of the human values of the people reside or are the part of that particular society. The societies all over the world have their distinct culture and peculiar way of having their lives lived on, right from the dressing habits, cuisine to the way of behaving in private and professional work culture. But there are some common universal values that every society has which are called as ethical values, these ethical values are somewhat more rigid than flexible or rather one can say that these are modifiable according to the changing society but at very slow rate of diffusion, these ethical values are the selflessness, compassion, empathy, truthfulness, etc. but of course there is distinctiveness in every society that there can be one value which is normal in one society but it could be a taboo in other society like for example eating beef is normal for christian society but it is heinous crime for the Hindus. There are some values of a society which are vulnerable for the manipulation by some selfish elites in the society which include stereotypical thinking, prejudices, traditions, patriarchy, etc. Any mass media plays a significant role in conditioning these social morality and social values over a period of time.

The role of the social media as a mass media comes in the context of shaping human society after mid-nineties with advent of the internet. The rate of change in the societal values is directly proportional

to the degree of penetration of the mass media upto the remotest and untouched human components. But at the same time the concept of sustainable development comes into the frame regarding the education of lagged people about how to handle, manage and how to interpret the social media, this concept is relevant to the Indian society where the rate and degree of penetration of social media is greater than the actual educational aspects required while handling these media, so it has created imbalance in the stability of societal order, whereas in western society things got developed according to their suitable needs and time, so they are more stable than Indian subjects.

Dimensions of social network



As like every coin has two sides, the social media components like facebook, youtube, whatsapp, blogs, podcasts etc. also have their pros. and cons. which may

Prove to be boon or curse respectively in the context of shaping a society. Looking at some of many pros. of the social media;-

- i) The one that stands above all others is that it enables people or a individual person to connect to different people around the world and present himself or herself about what are his/her values, thinking and point of view about any significant or insignificant event happening around the world.
- ii) The social media offers greater depth of connectivity that too with less efforts and cost compared to the traditional mass media.
- iii) It helps people to connect themselves virtually with their near and dears in this lockdown situation in pandemic.
- iv) It is acting as panacea against depression, solitude, boredom of people in lockdown by acting as a source of knowledge, information and of course entertainment.
- v) Many of the times the social media like youtube make it very comfortable to a person to sharpen his/her skills on anything like driving, cooking, swimming, communicating, exercising, etc. without joining any special academic class routine and with his/her own discretion of time.
- vi) In the recent time it has also become a source of remarkable earning for a lot of talented youth and this too out of their passion.

vii) As social media connects the people all over the world regardless of political, physical ~~and~~ ^{and} natural boundaries which eventually lead to mutual exchange of culture, way of living life and other regionally different aspects of people.

viii) It is also playing a great role in promoting the tourism industry and getting people acquainted with new places and people. This process of connecting people across the globe has indirect effect on sharing the societies and making them more integrated rather than confined to their particular regional identity and thoughts.

ix) Social media empowers people to present their opinion about any political issue or event is going on which is catering the need for more democratic inclusiveness of people.

x) Social media has boosted the speed of working and efficient time management in big corporates, IT companies as they communicate regarding the professional work on these platforms.

Coming to the cons. of the social media, these are not clearly distinguished from the pros. rather ingrained sensitively in opposite direction, for example;

i) As mentioned earlier that social media enables people to share their opinion regarding a situation of significance with others, it is a good thing no doubt but only until the person who shares his/her opinion is not of category of leader or major influence of the masses.

with vested interests and can cause terrible situation regarding law and order in a society just like what happened recently in the most powerful democratic nation of the world the United States of America, it was nearly on the verge of collapse as a large group of aggressive pro trump supporters raided the capitol upon being influenced over the facebook.

ii) In social media there is alarming increase in the cyber crimes, false news and data manipulation which endangers the privacy of an individual.

iii) The false news and data especially on whats app is predaating on the vulnerable section of society as like rumours on the COVID-19 vaccine efficacy and side effects are having detrimental effect on the vaccine confidence among the people especially those who are 45+ yrs. of age.

iv) Another long term danger of the social media to the societal morals is that the face to face conversations, loose talks, discussions are being replaced with chatting on the social media as everyone finding themselves busy in their lives. This has unnoticeable but very deep effect on societal mentality as when one person talks with another person face to face there is exchange of emotions, body language and actual presence of the person which can never be replaced by social media as it hardly elaborates about person's real feelings. The face to face conversation brings change in the attitude of people in more positive way which in turn build a strong society as strong human values have their share in building sound social morals

Q) Social media overusage creates a lot of physical, emotional and mental health issues such as back pain, neck pain, strain of eyes, anxiety, depression, mood swings, lethargy, procrastination, tiredness, etc.

Apart from being on the side of pros and cons there are some issues particularly considering the nation of India which are:

i) India is the largest trillion growing economy in the world and it is hope that it will grow exponentially provided that the youth of India which shares near about 34% of the total population as of 2020 gets their career orientation in right and best productive path. But recent trends show that India has become the largest market for the social media and gaming apps which are targeting youth and making them less productive. This issue needs to be tackled at national, regional and local level.

ii) Another emerging issue of these social media is the monopoly of only few players at global level as like google, facebook which has created drastic imbalance in the scale of unauthoritative power wielded by these tech giants. It should be controlled and managed by intergovernmental organisations otherwise it could be a potential threat to the democratic order of society in near future.

Other illegal activities like terror financing, online dating, financial frauds have gained a rampant space due to these social media platforms.

The ways ahead to counter the notorious elements from influencing the society through social media is at three different levels:

I] At intermediaries level:

Intermediaries are the platforms through which the information is disseminated. So intermediaries can use artificial intelligence to identify and counter the false contents from the platform. This can be done by flagging a page based on previous history of false content, using fact checks, etc.

II] At governance level:

Though the problem is not yet as serious as COVID-19 but it should be given due importance by government institutions by building capacity in youth and other ignorant people in society regarding the ethics and interpretation of social media just like it is making tribal areas aware about the hand washing and wearing masks in the COVID-19 pandemic.

III] At community level:

The educated youth should come forward and help NGO against the fight with these social media ill influences.

In conclusion it can be said that the social media is undeniable factor in shaping the modern society so it is in favour of human race if it is evolved in more sustainable way avoiding the ills. For that purpose it is necessary to proportionate the

rate of social media education with the rate of degree of penetration of social media in the society.

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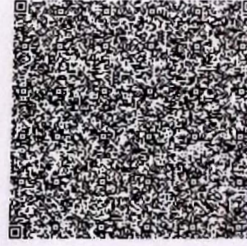
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