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YOJANA seeks to carry the message of the Plan to all sections of the people and promote a more earnest discussion on problems of social and economic development. Although published by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Yojana is not restricted to expressing the official point of view. Yojana is published in Assamese, Bengali, English, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu.

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In the Roman mythology, Janus is known as the god of beginning and transition, peace and war. It is perhaps an apt metaphor for the Social Media that seems to have acquired an ubiquitous presence in the modern world. The networked population of the world has grown from a 'low million' in the 1990s to a 'low billion' in the first decade of the 21st century. It is a remarkable pace of adoption of a new technology by the society at large. From business to politics, common man to celebrities, activists to government- all of them look at social-media as essential. There is almost a scramble to get on to the platform of social media to communicate, reach out and even to bring about the change that one considers desirable from his perspective. Indeed, the number of people using social media platform in the world is growing exponentially and it is transforming the way people relate to each other. The arena of public sphere is changing fast. The dynamics of social interaction is changing even faster. But are we seeing only one face of the Janus named Social Media?

The role of social media in the creation of what is called 'shared awareness' is immense. This awareness can be used for political mobilisation as witnessed in 2001 in the impeachment trial of Philippines President Joseph Estrada, One million signatures Campaign to secure women's rights in Iran, Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia or the Arab Spring, movements in India and Bangladesh recently etc. But it has also shown subversive possibilities that might lead to anarchism and damage to the socio-political fabric of a country. Not long ago, communal tension was generated in a number of states in South India due to sharing of morphed photographs on the internet and spreading of rumour through text messages.

The power and democratising potential of this medium is now being widely recognized by the governments across the world. Social Media is seen to be a platform to engage people in the developmental programmes of the government, seek feedback, check corruption and empower the people. However, it may not be quite correct to say that this medium in itself can achieve the goals enumerated above since its reach is still limited to less than 10 percent of the population. In India the number of people actively using Social Media is about 66 million but it is growing fast with the availability of cheaper broadband connection and internet enabled mobile handsets at very low prices. This opens up immense possibilities for policy makers and public bodies to reach the grass roots for the formulation and implementation of the programmes of the government. It is indeed enriching and deepening the democratic ethos of the country.

The Social Media is also transforming the contours of social interaction, changing the way we look at love, friendship, family, intimacy, language and expression, liking or disliking something etc. With sharing of personal data like photographs, video, music, documents and all kinds of information being just a click away, a number of ethical and moral questions are arising that need to be tackled. Children and Young adults are often unaware of the dangers behind the reckless use of Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, file sharing programmes etc. Parents and teachers are slowly waking up to the reality of the Social Media as a fact of life that needs close attention.

The concept and phenomenon of Social Media is complex and multi-dimensional. We can not afford to look away from it when it is getting more and more deeply embedded in our daily lives. True, it displays the characteristics of the mythical god Janus which has two contrasting aspects to it. This makes it all the more imperative to discuss, debate and understand its various aspects.

With these words, wish you a stimulating reading and 88- i.e. bye bye in the Chinese Social Media lingo!
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<tr>
<td>• Our innovation and the core of GS MAINS preparation, “Newspaper Analysis Module” a 4.5 months programme.</td>
<td>• RRVAP Programme in Geography, Public Ad, Sociology and History.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 4 Modules for paper- 2,3,4,5 individually with proper writing practice.</td>
<td>• Full course 120 days programme in Geography and Pub Ad commencing from 1st of June.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• writing skill development programme cum TEST SERIES according to changed syllabus.</td>
<td>• GS crash course for MAINS 2013 80 days programme based on changed UPSC programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• India Year book analysis module including Essay preparation and writing practice.</td>
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As traditional media becomes increasingly dictated by monetary decisions and establishment structures, social media will emerge as the more untainted voice of the citizens and will truly be the people’s platform, with the power to transform their transactions and interfaces with Governments.

And this democratisation of information will challenge established structures of power built on the premise of information control to change towards a new paradigm of a more transparent and accountable society.

A central piece of this emerging dynamic is the role social media will play in the process of democratising the information regime. Citizens everywhere are already connecting, interacting, sharing and expressing themselves in the alternative space of social media. These platforms, which started at the fringes, are now increasingly getting embedded in mainstream culture and inspiring actions and reactions in our physical world. The Arab Spring is just one of the examples of how this new media is shaping activities in the world of realpolitik.

In fact, social media is fast emerging as a powerful and unparalleled tool to share information, shape opinions, connect people across domains and cultures, bring participation, and above all to communicate as never before. Social media can become a very effective policy tool for Governments if they learn to leverage it in the best possible manner. Governments across the world need to communicate more effectively, engage citizens,

The author is Adviser to the Prime Minister on Public Information Infrastructure and Innovations.
garner feedback on policies and programmes in real time, and demonstrate a commitment to a more participative governance model. In all these areas social media platforms can offer the right interfaces and tools. Further, as internet penetration increases manifold and it becomes more localised, social media will enable more and more people to get connected.

At our office we have tried to capitalise on social media platforms for disseminating our message and communicating to people in real time. We have held two press conferences on Twitter to engage communities, journalists and the public at large and answer questions on specific themes related to our work. At one of these conferences we got about 2000 Tweets in a matter of 45 minutes – we had participation from more than 150 locations, largely from India but also from Europe, Middle East, UK, South East Asia and other parts of the world. Periodically we post videos and information related to our work on several of our websites and on YouTube. After we hosted the Global Innovation Roundtable 2012, where heads of innovation policy from Governments across the world were invited, we held a virtual press conference on Twitter to share the discussions and outcomes of the Roundtable. We have also initiated a lecture series on the National Knowledge Network which connects all higher educational institutions in the country, where lectures from one physical location are beamed to universities across the country. Finally, we have developed in partnership with the US Government an Open Government Platform to place Government data and documents in the public domain. This is now operational with more than 400 data sets and can be accessed at www.data.gov.in.

Apart from our office, many other initiatives in the Government of India are committed to harnessing social media. An ever increasing number of Ministries/organisations are on social media platforms including the Ministry of External Affairs, the Planning Commission and the Prime Minister’s Office. For instance, the Finance Minister conducted a Google Hangout to explain the Budget to the people of the country, a first of its kind at the national level. The Planning Commission has also taken some creative steps towards leveraging social media which was demonstrated in its efforts to communicate the 12th Plan via Social Media. The Deputy Chairman and Members of the Commission discussed the plan and answered questions from the public on a Google Hangout for the first time. The Planning Commission in collaboration with our office also organised a Hackathon on the Plan to receive feedback, visualisations, animations, etc. on the subject matter of the 12th Plan. This Hackathon also highlighted the power of this medium to crowd source creativity, talent and new solutions.

This is just the beginning. Social media is still at a very nascent stage and communities across the world are just beginning to understand the potential of this medium to impact discourse and communication. For instance, current methods of communication in Government could change to leverage Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, along with traditional methods such as press releases etc. Further, as traditional media becomes increasingly dictated by monetary decisions and establishment structures, social media will emerge as the more untainted voice of the citizens and will truly be the people’s platform, with the power to transform their transactions and interfaces with Governments.
Demonstrate why government bodies in India need to be on social media, we would like to draw your attention to one fact – by June 2013, 66 million Indians will be on social media. This number is fast growing, with over 150,000 new users joining social media platforms every month. While these statistics appear relatively minor in comparison to the total population, it is important to note their influence. For instance, a new study asserts, “at a very conservative estimate, the fortunes of contestants seeking election to the next Lok Sabha from not less than 150 constituencies will be determined by Facebook users.”

The point here is that government institutions can no longer ignore engagement on social media platforms. These platforms provide voice to people, and it is essential to not only listen to them for feedback but also engage in dialogue through them. This engagement is not just a marketing tool prior to elections. Rather, it allows for a constant engagement between Ministries and the public, and is now an important component of the government’s service delivery to citizens.

Governments around the world have recognized the power of social media. President Barack Obama uses Twitter town halls to take questions from the people, the Russian law department periodically seeks feedback on new policies through their Twitter handle, and in Ontario the province crowd-sourced ideas on how to better integrate social innovation in the government. Even in India, our Prime Minister’s Office uses Twitter to inform its 5 lakh plus followers on the activities of the PM. These are just a few examples to show that there is a growing acknowledgement that greater transparency can be achieved through proactive dissemination of information from the government.

An informal survey conducted by the National Innovation Council (NInC) showed that among the 50 respondents (under 30 demographic, working professionals) only 8% knew that the 12th Plan has recently been unveiled. While not representative, this number is a clear indication of the low awareness of the Plan, which is a document of national vision and combined aspiration. The Planning Commission, realizing the need for better communication, decided to begin with social media.

In March 2013, the Planning Commission went live on Twitter. Simultaneously, the Commission’s old account on Facebook was reactivated and accounts were created on Google+, SlideShare and YouTube. The idea was to make the 12th Plan more accessible and easy to read, and available in different depths for the audience.

As the Planning Commission “went social”, the initial response was fairly hostile. People questioned the relevance of a “Nehruvian-style-socialist body” in today’s times, and the issues of the methodology of the poverty line and the alleged expenditure worth lakhs of rupees on toilets. The Commission had predicted such a response, and to answer some of the questions raised by the public, a Google Hangout was planned to coincide with the 63rd Anniversary of the Planning Commission on 15th March. In the run-up to the Hangout, each division...
in the Planning Commission was asked to simplify its Plan chapter into easy-to-understand power point presentations, which were uploaded on to SlideShare. These presentations highlight the most important issues in each of the chapters and help make the recommendations more accessible.

During the Hangout, Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Adviser to the Prime Minister Sam Pitroda, Members of the Planning Commission and MoSRajeev Shukla dialogued with representatives from industry (Kiran Mazumdar Shaw), politics (Jay Panda), civil society (Amitabh Behar) and local government (Jagdish Bairwa, Sarpanch Kanpura) about the 12th Plan. The discussion used an external moderator (Vikram Chandra). In addition to sector-specific questions, answers given also included those around the relevance of the Commission, and how government officials can be made more accountable. These questions were taken from the panelists and social media. It would have been clear to the viewers that the Planning Commission’s commitment to interact was sincere and transparent, as difficult questions were not ignored. The event was livestreamed on YouTube and also broadcast live on several TV channels, including NDTV, DD, RSTV, CNBC, and All India Radio. The Hangout was also live-tweeted by the Planning Commission and First Post.

The reception to the Hangout was largely popular, and the quality of questions from the people showed a deep engagement with specific issues around power, agriculture, infrastructure, and governance, among others. An interesting trend was observed - the skepticism and too-little-too-late sentiment from prior to the Hangout was significantly reduced. The majority of the responses after the one-hour interaction appreciated the Commission for opening itself up for questions. This generated a lot of excitement on various platforms, especially Twitter, as it showed that the Hangout was not just a one-off event.

After the Hangout, the interest in the Plan spiked. Collaborating with NInc, a Hackathon was planned as follow-up to the Hangout. The Hackathon was envisaged with the aim of taking inputs and opinions from the citizens, especially youth by seeing the Plan through their eyes. The participants were expected to produce infographics, short-films as communication material as well as develop applications based on the 12th Plan and its initiatives. Over 1,900 participants registered and finally over 220 submissions came in. The Planning Commission now intends to use the material generated during the Hackathon to communicate the 12th Plan.

One of the more interesting aspects of the Planning Commission’s social media efforts has been the fact that both major events, the Hangout and the Hackathon, were conducted entirely through support from government bodies, such as National Informatics Center (NIC) and Press Information Bureau (PIB). Although other government institutions have recently conducted events like Hangouts, they have mostly relied on external production, equipment and publicity. By utilizing only government services, the Planning Commission has helped institutionalize these capabilities, making these events more easily replicable by other Ministries in the future.

News of Indian government institutions embracing social media is all the rage currently, with new Hangouts and Twitter conferences being announced every few weeks. However, it is important to ensure that the communication strategy underlying these efforts ties into the overall aims of the institution. It is also important to ensure consistency in approach, so that social media users feel that the institution is making an authentic effort to communicate. Therefore, the Planning Commission is constituting a small “Social Media Cell” to manage its outreach efforts. This first of its kind cell will be responsible for devising a communications strategy for the PC, coordinating the production of social-media friendly content, and arranging interactions between PC officers and the public. The experiences of the Planning Commission in establishing this cell and developing communication protocols should serve as a valuable template to other Ministries who wish to adopt similar structures.

1 Social Media in India (2013)- Internet and Mobile Association of India: In our classification, High Impact constituencies are those where the number of Facebook users are more than the margin of victory of the winner in the last Lok Sabha election, or where Facebook users account for over 10% of the voting population. Our analysis throws up 160 High Impact Constituencies out of the total of 543, which will go to the polls.
ECONOMICS AT ITS BEST
IAS / IES / UGC

Civil Services Rankers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>IAS/IES</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<td>Ashima Jain</td>
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<td>Neeraj Kumar</td>
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<td>11th</td>
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<td>Surabhi Malik</td>
<td>IAS</td>
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Indian Economic Service Rankers

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<td>Bishakha Chakraborty</td>
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<td>Rahul Kumar</td>
<td>96</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laldinrampuili</td>
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Score of Axiom’s Civil Services Pass-outs

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<td>Shaveta Dhankhad</td>
<td>391/600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neeraj Kumar</td>
<td>379/600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arulanandan</td>
<td>365/600</td>
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<td>Ashima Jain</td>
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UGC JRF Pass-outs

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<td>Narendra Kumar</td>
<td>351/600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neetu Gupta</td>
<td>339/600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sanyam Joshi Suresh</td>
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UGC NET Pass-outs

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<td>Satinder</td>
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<td>Kriti</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vikas Yadav</td>
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<td>Vandana Kapoor</td>
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The Truth is self evident

YOJANA May 2013 9
India and the Ascendancy of the Global South

The Report identifies four areas for particular attention: “enhancing equity, including on gender dimension; enabling greater voice and participation of citizens, including youth; confronting environmental pressures; and managing demographic change”

The author is a senior fellow at the Center on International Cooperation, New York University.
sustaining the global economic growth. While the advent of both the G-20 and BRICS marked the ascendency of the global South it did so only in terms of GDP and not human development.

In contrast, the HDR looks not only at GDP but also measures the human development index (HDI) of a country based on education, health, gender inequality and income parameters. In doing so the HDR puts human security on par with the traditional notions of state and economic security. In this context, the Report’s findings are revealing: apart from matching the combined GDP of the G-6, the BIC countries have also dramatically improved their HDI scores. India’s overall HDI score, for instance, rose from 0.41 in 1990 to 0.554 in the latest Report.

However, even more significantly, in addition to the BICs, at least 40 other countries of the South made gains on their HDI scores between 1990 and 2012. These countries were as varied as Bangladesh, Benin, Columbia, El Salvador, Gambia, Laos, Uganda, Vietnam, as well as countries either recovering from or still in the throes of violent turmoil, such as Afghanistan, Egypt, Myanmar, Rwanda and Tunisia. In fact of the 132 countries with a complete data series only two – Lesotho and Zimbabwe – had lower HDI value in 2012 than in 1990.

In addition the Report also records the rapid rise of the middle class in the global South from 26% to 58% between 1990 and 2010. By 2020 it is estimated that of the 3.2 billion projected global middle class population as many as 1.7 billion (over 53%) will be located in Asia-Pacific region alone. Moreover, within this region, China and India will account for more than 75% (about 1.3 billion) of the middle class population, with related consequences of higher consumption.

In terms of income the worldwide proportion of people living in extreme poverty fell from 43.1% in 1990 to 22.4% in 2008, with the BIC countries making the most impressive strides in reducing the proportion of their “income poor” population. China has made the most striking reduction from 60.2% in 1990 to less than 13.1% in 2008 while Brazil’s reduction was from the relatively higher base of 17.2% in 1990 to 6.1% in 2009. In contrast India is the laggard that marked a decline in its “income poor” population from 49.4% in 1990 to a mere 32.7% in 2010.

In fact, India is a straggler amongst the BIC and even the BRICS countries. Its overall HDI ranking of 136 (out of a total of 186 countries) is not only the lowest among the BRICS but is 15 places behind its closest BRICS partner – South Africa, which ranks at 121. India also comes in last among the BRICS in all of the other HDI indicators, except two – women’s participation in national parliament and maternal mortality ratio.

Its adult literacy rate of 62.8% is way behind even South Africa’s 88.7% and only 38.7% of India’s population is educated up to the secondary education – again, the lowest among BRICS countries. India also has the highest infant mortality rate; highest death rate of children under the age of five; and the highest number of underweight children among all the BRICS countries. India’s gender equality ratio is worse than every country even in South Asia, except Afghanistan. What are the reasons behind India’s relatively poor ranking in key HDI indicators?

To address this question, it is important to understand the factors that led countries to improve their HDI standing. These are revealed in the 2013 Report, which identifies several crucial elements.

First, countries that have improved their HDI standing did so on account of three principal drivers: “a proactive developmental stage, tapping of global markets and determined social policy and innovation”.

Ideally a proactive developmental stage will lead to policies that are “based on long-term vision and leadership, shared norms and values, and rules and institutions that build trust and cohesion”. In addition, policies for investing in human development and capabilities should not be regarded as “an appendage of the growth process but an integral part of it”. For instance, there is a clear co-relation between public expenditure on health and education and rapid economic growth. In reality, however, the development and implementation of policies is likely to be uncertain, especially in large and complex societies, like India.
Similarly while global markets and foreign direct investment (FDI) have played an important role in wealth generation that alone is not adequate to enhance the HDI ranking of countries. This is particularly evident in the case of FDI into countries rich in natural resources but relatively poor in human resources: for instance, between 2003 and 2009 many resource-rich African countries which grew economically on account of FDI inflows still notched up some of the lowest non-income HDI values.

On the other hand, successful integration with global markets requires investment in people, institutions and infrastructure. As the HDR notes: “Without investment in people, returns from global markets are likely to be limited”. Thus, there is a direct co-relation between the need to enhance HDI standing to draw the maximum benefit from integrating with the world economy.

Moreover, countries that have deliberately pursued social policy and innovation, especially public investment in health and education, have sustained rapid growth. Coupled with this, “growth has frequently been much more effective at reducing poverty in countries with low-income inequality than countries with high-income inequality”. Indeed, policies that promote social equality among different religious, ethnic and racial groups and inclusion of those on the economic fringe “can underpin long-term economic growth by supporting the emergence of a healthy, educated labour force”.

This echoes almost exactly the India Human Development Report 2011 which also argued “investment in health and education can enhance human functioning… and further economic growth”. Based on its HDI assessment of states the Indian HDR also stressed the need for promoting social and economic equality on the grounds that “poorer states are so because there are large proportions of the excluded social groups (who are generally poorer) living there; conversely, in the poorer states the different development programmes do not reach the targeted population” of economically and socially deprived sections.

Thus, there is a close co-relation between the need to build national consensus for long-term policies on the one hand to ensure the gradual but deliberate integration with the world economy and on the other to invest in domestic human development to take full advantage of the opportunities provided by the external openness. Without this two-pronged approach neither economic growth nor human development can be assured. Such an approach calls for political leadership at the highest national level.

Finally, South-South cooperation, which for most of the 20th century was a mere slogan, is emerging as a vital factor not only in the economic growth of poorer countries but also the human development of their populations. This cooperation is evident at several levels. At the ideational level the less developed countries can learn and benefit from the success of the emerging economies of the South; their experience is more relevant to the developing countries than the experience of the OECD countries. At the practical level, South-South cooperation in investment, finance, technology transfer, and trade were key new factors in facilitating the economic growth of the global South.

One indication of this is the rise in South-South trade from 8.1% in 1980 to 26.7% of total world trade today. In addition nearly half of all remittances sent home by emigrants from the South come from workers living in other developing countries. Similarly growth in low-income countries would have been lower by as much as 1.1-percentage point between 2007 and 2010 had China and India registered a fall in growth rate similar to that of developed economies. Moreover, global South countries have increased their share of global FDI to 50% and, as an example, nearly half the financing for infrastructure projects in Sub-Saharan Africa over the past decade came from countries and regional funds of the South. Similarly, the BICs have emerged as the largest donors outside the OECD. Moreover, the development assistance from the South often, if not always,
comes without conditionalities (unlike most OECD assistance) and is mostly used to build much-needed infrastructure.

Yet, despite the clear ascendency of the South and the evident improvement of the HDI ranking of a significant number of developing countries, including India, human development remains precarious on account of income, health, gender and education inequalities. According to the HDR inequality-adjusted HDI trends for 66 countries revealed that “overall inequality declined only marginally, because declining inequality in health and education was offset by rising inequality in income”.

Consequently, even though income inequality fell in Latin America it still has the most unequal distribution of all regions. Similarly, Sub-Saharan Africa has the most inequality in health while South Asia is most unequal in education.

Against this backdrop and to sustain the gains made in human development the Report identifies four areas for particular attention: “enhancing equity, including on gender dimension; enabling greater voice and participation of citizens, including youth; confronting environmental pressures; and managing demographic change”. Their relevance for India is evident in the spate of civil society-led movements calling for progress in all these areas and the excruciatingly hesitant response of India’s polity.

The Report also encourages the establishment of new institutions to facilitate regional integration and further strengthen South-South cooperation. It calls on emerging powers in the global South, like India, to lead by example not just domestically but also regionally and globally. At the same time the Report boldly points out the need for the outdated global governance structures to be reformed to reflect the new economic and geopolitical realities.

While this will, doubtless, sound like sweet music to New Delhi, it comes with the important caveat for India to shoulder the responsibility of leadership and governance at the domestic, regional and global level.

(E-mail : wps2@nyu.edu)
Explosion in Digital Space: Opportunities and Challenges for India

Patrick S L Ghose
Paranjoy Guha Thakurta

We in India will have to necessarily engage actively with social media to ensure its progressive aspects far outweigh the regressive elements of these rapidly expanding forms of communication and engagement.

The authors are a media professional and an independent journalist and educator respectively. Research assistance provided by Sachin Arya.
organizations, communities and individuals.”

To appreciate the significance of those statements above one needs to take a quick look at a certain set of reasonably well-authenticated statistics relating to internet usage and penetration that pertain to June 2012. If one compares these numbers with a similar set of figures pertaining to the situation that prevailed twelve years earlier at the beginning of the new millennium, internet use globally has grown by over 560 per cent in this period. Still, the penetration of the internet in the total population of the world is just over 30 per cent; in other words, two out of three individuals on the planet still have not used the internet, leave alone benefit from it. In Asia, which currently accounts for over half the world’s population, internet growth has been in excess of 840 per cent over the last twelve years. Asia currently accounts for almost 45 per cent of internet users the world over and India contributed under 12 per cent of this number in the middle of 2012.

In the early 2000s, software developers enabled end-users to move from a static and rather passive viewing of pages on the world wide web to more interactive, user-generated content within what were online or virtual communities. This resulted in what was termed Web 2.0 but more importantly created the phenomenon we now call social media.

Social media includes the ability and the facility to discuss, create, cooperate on, share and modify information in text, image, audio and video forms among users of social networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, LinkedIn, Pinterest, MySpace, Soundcloud and a host

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<td>1,073,380,925</td>
<td>4,514,400</td>
<td>167,335,676</td>
<td>15.6 %</td>
<td>3,606.7 %</td>
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<td>3,922,066,987</td>
<td>114,304,000</td>
<td>1,076,681,059</td>
<td>27.5 %</td>
<td>841.9 %</td>
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<td>Europe</td>
<td>820,918,446</td>
<td>105,096,093</td>
<td>518,512,109</td>
<td>63.2 %</td>
<td>393.4 %</td>
<td>21.5 %</td>
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<td>Middle East</td>
<td>223,608,203</td>
<td>3,284,800</td>
<td>90,000,455</td>
<td>40.2 %</td>
<td>2,639.9 %</td>
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<td>North America</td>
<td>348,280,154</td>
<td>108,096,800</td>
<td>273,785,413</td>
<td>78.6 %</td>
<td>153.3 %</td>
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<td>Latin America/Caribbean</td>
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<td>18,068,919</td>
<td>254,915,745</td>
<td>42.9 %</td>
<td>1,310.8 %</td>
<td>10.6 %</td>
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<td>Oceania/Australia</td>
<td>35,903,569</td>
<td>7,620,480</td>
<td>24,287,919</td>
<td>67.6 %</td>
<td>218.7 %</td>
<td>1.0 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>World Total</td>
<td>7,017,846,922</td>
<td>360,985,492</td>
<td>2,405,518,376</td>
<td>34.3 %</td>
<td>566.4 %</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
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Source: http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm
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<td>1,076,681,059</td>
<td>27.5 %</td>
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<td>254,336,520</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(23.62 % of internet users)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rest of World</td>
<td>3,095,779,935</td>
<td>44.1 %</td>
<td>1,328,837,317</td>
<td>42.9 %</td>
<td>55.2 %</td>
<td>721,607,440</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7,017,846,922</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>2,405,518,376</td>
<td>34.3 %</td>
<td>100.0 %</td>
<td>975,943,960</td>
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NOTES: (1) Asia Internet Usage and Population Statistics were updated for June 30, 2012. (2) Asia Facebook subscribers are for December 31, 2012. (3) Population estimates are based mainly on data from the US Census Bureau. (4) The most recent usage comes mainly from data published by Nielsen Online, ITU, Facebook, official country statistics and other trustworthy local sources. (5) Data on this site may be cited, giving the due credit and establishing an active link back to Internet World Stats. Copyright © 2013, Miniwatts Marketing Group. All rights reserved worldwide.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1,205,073,612</td>
<td>5,000,000</td>
<td>137,000,000</td>
<td>11.4 %</td>
<td>11.4 %</td>
<td>62,713,680</td>
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<td>(45.77 % of internet users)</td>
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of other similar sites. While it may be true that social media has led to what is called the “democratization of the internet” and most significantly preserved the ideals of free speech and expression, it is equally true that it has also created a lurking monster which seems to be growing in strength. With the availability of the internet on the rapidly burgeoning number of mobile hand-held devices like smartphones and tablets, the sense of immediacy in virtual socialising has increased manifold. Not only has inappropriate content for impressionable and young minds become easily accessible, it has consequently allowed persons with reprehensible intentions to use the medium for various nefarious purposes. Cyber-bullying, cyber-stalking, rumour-mongering are only the tip of the tail of that menacing monster.

Let us consider what happened when ethnic clashes between the indigenous Bodo tribe and Bengali Muslim settlers broke out in the district of Kokrajhar in Assam on July 25, 2012. Mainstream media, after choosing to not fully report on the ground realities of the clashes, were subjected to pertinent questions and adverse criticism on social media on their silence and/or inadequate coverage of the situation, offered various and perhaps curious reasons for this lack of reportage. While social media did step in with users reporting from the affected areas, and information about shelters, hospitals, relief facilities also being made available on many websites, the flip side was that vicious and unwarranted rumours too were transmitted via social media. These rumours, which began to circulate in early August via social networking sites as well as through mobile telephony and messaging, caused panic among India’s north-eastern ethnic people who were located in southern and western India, mainly in Bangalore but also in Chennai, Mumbai and Pune. The Indian Railways had to cope with an unprecedented rush of these people wanting to go home as soon as possible as they had “heard” that Muslim fundamentalists would target them in retaliation for the clashes that had taken place in particular areas in Assam where Bodos live.

This negative aspect of the social media has to be placed in a wider context. There is one view that argues that the concept of the right to offend is increasingly being countered by the notion of the right to feel offended at everything. The question then arises as to whether freedom should come first and ethics second. Why should Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India be restricted by Article 19(2)?

Article 19(2) of the Constitution of India lays down what are considered “reasonable restrictions” on the exercise of the provisions of Article 19(1)(a) which specifies that freedom of expression is a fundamental right of every Indian citizen. The problem essentially is one of defining who decides what is “reasonable” and what is not. If it is the courts of law that decide, one would not have too many reasons to complain. However, the definition of what is a “reasonable restriction” to the right to freedom of expression is decided by various sections of society (from the law enforcing authorities to fundamentalist groups) under different circumstances and often in an arbitrary manner, thereby causing situations of chaos and confusion. One can provide the following examples to illustrate this contention:

Shaheen Dhada and Rinu Srinivasan, two young women from Palghar near Mumbai were arrested in January after Shaheen posted a comment on Facebook wondering why there should be a bandh-like situation in Mumbai following the death of Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray and Rinu had “liked” the comment. The case, was later dropped and the two police personnel who had arrested the women were transferred.

Cartoonist Aseem Trivedi was arrested on sedition charges in September 2012. His cartoons offended people in power.

Social media has also tarred reputations of public figures, infringed laws of privacy, copyright and other human rights through user-generated content. Yet it has in no way deterred the growth of this phenomenon which threatens to replace and outdo traditional media whether in India or the rest of the world. Despite criticism that social media has adversely affected personal communication whereby people no longer seem to find the time to talk to each other in the old-fashioned, face-to-face way, the digital space keeps throwing up newer and more engaging means of social networking.
One of the main drivers of social networking and the growth of social media is mobile telephony. A C Nielsen’s *The Social Media Report 2012* assesses that “More people are using smartphones and tablets to access social media. ... With more connectivity, consumers have more freedom to use social media wherever and whenever they want.”

According to the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) report, the number of social media users in urban India reached 62 million by December 2012. Nearly three out of four (74 per cent) of all active internet users in urban India use the social media.

Some of the other key takeaways from this report are:

- Active social media user base in India: 32.5 million (82 per cent of the active mobile Internet base)
- A higher proportion (82 per cent) of mobile active Internet users access social media, as compared to that accessed by the total active Internet base (72 per cent)
- Considering the top 35 cities in India, 77 per cent or 18.2 million of the active mobile internet users (out of a total of 23.6 million) access social media, second only after e-mail (83 per cent)
- Average frequency of social networking access using mobile internet: seven days a week
- Facebook is the leading website accessed by 97 per cent of all social media users in India
- The growth in the number of social networking users can be attributed to the rising internet penetration in India, through increasing affordability of smartphones and consequent mobile internet use.

While evaluating social media usage by different devices, it is interesting to note that there are about 39.7 million active mobile internet users in urban India or almost half the total active internet base. It should be noted that these mobile internet users belong to the overall general active internet user base of 80.2 million individuals.

In fact, social networking is considered the main internet activity done on a mobile phone which is mentioned by exactly one-third (33 per cent) of all respondents, just a bit lower (32 per cent) mentioned for email.

Indians spend an average of approximately 30 minutes every day on social media. Of these numbers, the maximum users are young men (84 per cent) and college-going students (82 per cent).

It is interesting to interpolate this data with the country’s 2011 census statistics. India has more than 50 per cent of its population below the age of 25 and more than 65 per cent below the age of 35. It is expected that, in 2020, the average age of an Indian will be 29 years. The census indicated 74 per cent literacy among the entire population with the male literacy rate at 82 per cent. With cheaper mobile devices becoming more easily available, it can be safely assumed that internet usage -- and consequently social media networking – will show quantum leaps in the next few years in India.

The IAMAI report *Social Media in India 2012* states: “Social networking through mobile phones is an ever increasing phenomenon observed today. With mobile penetrations reaching very high levels, and an increasing number of individuals owning feature-rich phones or even smartphones that allow Internet access, social networking is rapidly penetrating the India active internet user base.
Affordable mobile internet plans additionally serve rising usage levels.”

While all this sounds very promising, it is not yet clear how far social media can possibly influence current public opinion on a mass scale the way television and even print media has and still does. Gautam Benegal, artist and freethinker, says in a recent post in Facebook: “Netizens -- as opposed to citizens -- will only become a significant votebank that will be taken seriously by our leaders if computers and internet enter every home, and voting is possible online. Until then netizens will only be howling away.”

Research in India shows a gap much along the lines of the rural-urban divide – those who have access to the internet and those who don’t, perhaps more appropriately called the netizen-citizen divide. The earlier mentioned fracas in Bangalore and the impulsive and impromptu gathering of thousands at India Gate in Delhi last December protesting against the gang-rape of a young woman are but exceptions. (At the same time, not all Indians are oblivious to the manner in which social media has been used in popular movements, for instance, in Cairo’s Tahrir Square and in Shahbag in Dhaka.)

At present, more than a third (34 per cent) of the social media networking users in India are based in the top eight metro cities, even as less than a quarter (24 per cent) are from small towns with populations less than 200,000 each while another 11 per cent resides in even smaller towns. According to the IAMAI, 72 per cent or 58 million people who are active internet users are in urban India. It is telling that the first internet in India report (I-Cube) of 2006 did not cover any rural area while the 2012 report covers only the “top 35 cities”.

However, without internet access, social media or networking would not have a leg to stand on were it not for the amazing growth of mobile telephony in the country. By June 2012 there were more than 900 million subscriber identity modules (SIMs) in India, up from a mere 10 million in 2000. Forbes magazine’s Elizabeth Woyke wrote in June 2011 that “India will pass China to become the world’s largest mobile market in terms of subscriptions.”

Budde.com, which claims to be the largest telecommunications research site on the internet, has stated: “A number of factors have been responsible for the amazing growth in India’s telecom sector; apart from the obvious booming economy and the rapid expansion in the country’s middle class, the growth drivers include low tariffs, low handset prices and most notably a highly competitive market created by the government and the regulator”. It also mentions that the mobile market in India was likely to expand at an annual rate of between10 per cent and 15 per cent over 2012-2013” and that digital subscriber line (DSL) fixed-line broadband services were slowly losing ground to non-DSL platforms, most notably wireless broadband platforms. “The impact of mobile broadband was finally starting to filter through the market and in the medium term this was expected to lift broadband penetration significantly”.

On 12 April 2012, Economic Times quoted a Deloitte study stating that the “next wave of telecom growth will emerge from rural India and operators will increasingly use the voice platform as well as localised content to ensure relevance and widespread adoption in rural zones.”

While this is indeed likely as internet access expands substantially across the country, social media networks are likely to be predominantly limited to
the English-knowing classes as it is at present and this may prove to be a hindrance to the predicted growth of this media sector in the immediate future.

The use of social media has grown worldwide and promises to grow exponentially in the foreseeable future. Whereas the use of social media in India has been constrained by the relatively low penetration of internet usage in the country and the existence of a sharp digital divide, the growing use of the internet through mobile hand-held wireless devices in particular indicates that social media will become increasingly influential in India and will impact different players in various social and economic segments of the population in a range of ways -- from providing utilitarian information to profound knowledge, from impacting trends in the arts to shaping business and commerce, from empowering underprivileged sections and strengthening democracy to causing chaos and anarchy by spreading rumour and falsehood.

Like the proverbial double-edged sword, internet based social media will cut in both directions, in ways that are positive and negative, good and bad, creative and destructive -- social media will mimic and shape, minimize and magnify social, economic and political trends. Just as the internet has made access to knowledge and wisdom as easily accessible as pornography, social media too will continue to influence contemporary reality in the world and in India in a manner that is mixed. These will expedite economic growth and contribute to human development and will also, simultaneously, facilitate plagiarism, lead to new forms of crime and addiction, degrade values and alienate some from the more practical aspects of life.

Like these or hate these, we will not be able to ignore social media. We in India will have to necessarily engage actively with social media to ensure its progressive aspects far outweigh the regressive elements of these rapidly-expanding forms of communication and engagement.

(E-mail: paranjoy@gmail.com)

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DO YOU KNOW?

What is Bitcoin?

Bitcoin is a kind of virtual token which is being used by some people as a kind of currency. Currently there are about 11 million Bitcoins in existence. The Bitcoins are represented by a unique online registration number. The process is called 'mining' in which a computer solves a mathematical problem with a 64 digit solution. With each solution the computer's owner is rewarded with 25 Bitcoins. About 3600 Bitcoins are created every day through the programming done by computers. Bitcoins can be received only by the persons who have Bitcoin address. The Bitcoin address is generated by a string of 27-34 letters and numbers which acts as a kind of virtual post box to send and receive the Bitcoins.

The original Bitcoin software was developed by one Satoshi Nakamoto. It started as an obscure project in 2009. Since it is believed to have value for exchange, it is also seen as some kind of currency. However, it is a volatile and rather chaotic currency because of the lack of liquidity and a central monetary authority. Its demand and supply balance is uncontrolled. Bitcoins are vulnerable to manipulation and speculation in the absence of any large exchanges where buyers and sellers can find each other. However, some websites act as Bitcoin exchanges. Due to the anonymity of the creators of Bitcoin, it is also used in a number of illegal transactions like drugs and smuggling.

What is trolling?

Trolling is posting of inflammatory or objectionable material on the internet. Trolling involves sowing hatred, racism or creating any other anti-social feelings. Trolls like to promote fighting. Their objective is to provoke others. They make others feel insulted and angry. It is an anti-social activity as the persons indulging in such activities violate the etiquettes, courtesy and consideration for the feeling of others. Trolling on Internet and posting of irresponsible and abusive material shows that a person indulging in such an activity has no sense of social responsibility. Such behaviour can include posting jokes or comments that may incite violent behaviour online or offline. Trolls often hijack debates on online forums and try to impose their views on those who dissent by coercion or by using abusive language. Trolls generally express extreme opinions that tend to incite people and generate abusive online discussion.

(Compiled by Hasan Zia, Editor, Yojana, Urdu)

J&K WINDOW

Night flights in Jammu & Kashmir soon

Night flights in the Srinagar-Jammu-Delhi sector are likely to become operational soon to give a fillip to tourism even as Srinagar and Kargil are being connected by a commercial helicopter service. A high-level team from the Center has shown tremendous enthusiasm for the proposals of boosting tourism and providing relief to the common passengers, and the state is expecting night flights till 10 p.m.

The Chief Secretary of J&K has said that night flights were likely to begin at Srinagar airport but Jammu airport too would be equipped to handle operations. He said the Central team has agreed to extend the private helicopter service to the Kargil-Srinagar route besides reducing its fares. A private company had launched the service on the Kargil-Jammu-Chandigarh route last year. Night flights in the sector, had become inevitable as the rush of tourists and common passengers was increasing. Airlines took undue advantage, hiking the fares phenomenally in 2011 and 2012.
Myth: The weightage of CSAT and GS in Civils (prelims) is 50-50
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SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Capital Creation Through Social Media

N Seshagiri

Social media means different things to different people. It can be used for hobby or as a serious and effective business tool. Behind every organizational success story in this media is a lot of patient planning and a sharp focus on getting things right - putting all the right elements in the right way in the right place at the right time. Like any other technology or facility, social media technology or facility too becomes good or bad depending on how it is used. In this article we forecast the evolutionary path likely up to the year 2020 for the ICT-ambience as well as the social media shaped by it and show how the enhanced or new features of this media can be well utilized to create social capital in the process of socio-economic development of the country.

Evolution of ICT-Ambience For Social Media

Formal technology forecast exercises carried out by the author in the past four years had predicted the IT-ambience supporting the social media, among others, up to 2020 in terms of Converged Mobile Handset (CMH), Bandwidth Enablers, Fourth Generation Long term Evolution (4G-LTE), Nanotechnology, web 3.0, Mobile Intelligent Agents (MIA), Cloud Computing and Reusable Component Software. These are briefly outlined below.

Converged Mobile Handset

By 2020 there will not be a Personal Computer (PC) hardware industry as we know today. The evolution of smartphone and tablet is poised for a Convergence into a single ‘Converged Mobile Handset’, which will incorporate in it full mobile phone functions as well as high end PC compute functions. Asterisk type creative PBX will result in an open source telephony platform which will be highly customizable with a wide compliance with standards and include service features of voice-mail, hosted conferencing, call queuing and music on hold. This will be scaleable from a few to a few hundred phone users.

The compute power of a high end PC will be actuated by callable apps depending on the problem environment on hand. All the seven more important intrinsic features required for a ubiquitous
social media will be available: processing power, quality and power of graphics, broadband multimedia, full internet access, content handling and organizing capability, real time multimedia transaction ability, portability and affordability.

Eventually every citizen will own a CMH if we target for the use of ICT for evolution of a nation-wide utilitarian social media.

Bandwidth Enablers

While promoting a nation wide social media, one of the technological hurdles encountered will be the availability of bandwidth. First and foremost, economy of bandwidth utilization requires a phased but sure transition from analog to digital, eventually digitalizing every conceivable application touched by the network. The second imperative will be the utilization of the bandwidth with least wastage. The third is the broad-basing of the spectrum outside the essential defense spectrum. The fourth and more difficult one to enforce is the prioritization of applications.

Many approaches are evolving along different technologies for addressing these problems. We will, in the next few years, have a mature technology in the Ultra Wide Band (UWB) with EM waveforms of instantaneous fractional energy bandwidth using radiating pulses that are very short in time and transmitted using an ‘impulse radio’. In the context of a large social media, an efficient ‘Medium Access Control (MAC)’ can be introduced to allow multiple users to share a common resource. Another attractive technology is the optical wireless communication which does not need spectrum allocation.

Fourth Generation Long Term Evolution

The 4G-LTE can work on 1.2 Mhz to 20 Mhz as well as GSM frequencies with carrier frequencies in the range 20-160 Mhz. It is based on Orthogonal Frequency Division Multiplex (OFDM) modulation, which is highly resistant to multipath interference. A new antenna technology called MiMo increases the throughout several times. The 4G-LTE utilizes the allotted spectrum without waste.

4G-LTE enables the users to take the centre stage by fulfilling most of their needs at low cost. Using this, an adaptive, universally accessible, and easily configurable social media network can be built which can cope with unprecedented complexities through self-organized local controls. Though the network elements may vary considerably in type and characteristics, we can host highly interdependent and integrated applications. Despite the variety of network technologies and services using them, seamless mobile communication can be made by the user, for reaching personal services anywhere anytime over all access networks and devices. The user can be guaranteed adequate security and privacy of communication and transaction. With the availability of such facilities, the user can build context and situation awareness, personalization and semantic services into their applications along with a proactive service provisioning, which are essential for a nationwide social media.

Impact of Nanotechnology

If nanotech development accelerates at the current level, it will have substantial impact on ICT, many of them conducive to the social media. Current capital investment in nanotech is over $2 Billion, but R&D investment is ten times this. The world wide nanotech product industry exceeds $ 30 billion. Indian nanotech export is now about $ 100 million with over 50 companies actively involved in it.

Nanotech operates on the scale of molecules and molecular clusters and so will reduce the size and power consumption of ICT systems substantially. In ICT, its impact will be more on memory and storage devices, displays, central processing unit parts and sensors. Wireless devices and Wireless Communication systems are expected to experience its profound impact by increasing the speed and memory several times and decrease energy consumption. Both CMH and Wireless Systems will experience a positive impact. Though toxicity concerns are there, solutions are in sight.

Web 3.0 and Beyond

Some of the major limbs of Web 2.0 are: social book marking, social networking, content aggregation, wikis, mashups and cloud computing.

Here, we had a new media paradigm-Social Networking and a new technology paradigm - Microblogging. Social networking is a social structure made of individual and/or organizations, which are connected by one or more specific types of social interdependencies such as friendship, membership, likes, dislikes, common interests, beliefs, knowledge and the like. It increases the level of interactions between like-oriented people. Micro blogging is a multimedia blogging that enables one to send brief text updates or micro media
and publish them for viewing by anyone if public, or by a restricted group of one’s choice if private.

In Web 3.0, the CMH, the email and the TV could all produce feedback that can be conveniently incorporated on any blogging platform, thereby giving a seamless integration that can give access to blogging for the masses in the society as a necessity and not only as a hobby. Live blogging will become common place and bring the world of conferences and gatherings wherever you are and whenever it is convenient to you, with just a CMH in your hand. This will make the conductors of such meetings & conferences to bend their back to attract their virtual crowd.

Web 3.0 expands the web 2.0 features while it introduces new features like the semantic web in which the meaning, i.e. semantics, of information and services on the web is defined, making it possible for the web to understand and respond to the request of people and automatic gadgets to use the web content. With semantic features of the 4G-LTE, the 4G & Web3.0 evolutions will take place synchronously.

With CMH becoming a universal object of possession by everyone, carried with them at all times, several new creative services will become possible. For example, the services of mobile devices, Geographical Positioning System (GPS) and web-based data can be combined in a convenient manner like the Location Based Services (LBS). LBS can identify the location of a person or object like a friend, associate or a nearest facility like ATM, including the ready display of a properly oriented local map.

Access to real-time data including real-time events of your interest happening will become prevalent on Web 3.0, which can become a valuable asset in social networking. Real-time search is also possible in which the data being searched is updated almost instantly or very frequently, including soft search like opinions of a selected group or popularity indexes apart from hard searches which are based on hard established facts.

If more relevant individual experiences are crucial in the social media, more personalized information is called for, thereby impinging, sometimes, on the identity and privacy of individuals, especially when such data can be linked and correlated through a Universal Identity (UID) system like Aadhar. Web 3.0 has technological solutions to obviate the need for ‘throwing the baby along with the bath water’. For example, open ID is a Web 3.0 type concept similar to Aadhar which provides a single digital identity for users that can be used all over the Web. Over 50,000 Web sites, including Google, Yahoo, Microsoft and Face book permit users to sign in using open ID. The present levels of security that apply to online banking innovation including ‘Online Paperless Money Transfer’ is getting incorporated into Web 3.0 to give the required secure, convenient, seamless web experience.

Web 3.0 will move well beyond simple keyword searches by increasingly making use of semantic technologies to give a smarter search environment suit the volume and complexity of the social databases. The earlier success with Search Monkey of Yahoo, Rich Snippets of Google, Bing Semantic Engine of Microsoft, among others, have encouraged the evolution of more powerful search engines on Web 3.0.

The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) pioneered the ‘Linked Data Project’ to link together Web-based resources, that were not linked previously or were inaccessible as part of a Open Data Movement, exemplified by Wikipedia. The potential importance of this and similar projects to sociological analysis and research hardly needs emphasis. This is one of the tools in the initial efforts linking several hundreds of data sources on the social, economic and demographic descriptors of the cities, towns and villages of India. This will assist researchers working on the creation of social capital through policy frameworks and inclusive development initiatives. The pioneering projects of W3C are supporting our efforts by shaping Web 3.0 with the objectives of: Web for everyone, Web content accessibility as openly as possible, providing web security as much as an individual desires, enabling a web on everything, providing an expanding coverage of mobility, providing interactive expanding coverage on the semantic paradigm over the web. This will metamorphose websites into web services which is sine qua non of the feasibility of our goal.

Web 3.0 is already there but evolving the features outlined above among others and steadfastly galloping towards 2020.

Mobile Intelligent Agents

The volume and complexity of information content in society is staggering because we are dealing with individuals and groups of
Evolution of Features of the Social Media

The social media ecosystem comprises of interactions, activities, transactions, and behaviors among a group of individuals with certain common identities and interests who can be together called a ‘Community’. They share online opinions, information and knowledge utilizing conversational media like brief texts, pictures and audio and video clips. In as much as the social media and web 2.0 were closely related, though not synonymous, Web 3.0 evolution described above already characterizes the social media tools, services and applications that are evolving - with the traditional categories of engagement: Communication, collaboration, Education and Entertainment. The social media categories enabled by these categories of engagement on Web 2.0 that we are already familiar with, viz., social networking, Web publishing, microblogging, live casting, virtual reality constructs, Mobility, Interpersonal Transaction, Sharing and Creation of Still Pictures and Audio-Video Clips, Content Aggregation, Content Search, Really Simple Syndication (RSS) of Content and Gaming, are not only made more versatile, user-friendly, ubiquitous and powerful for creative applications and services in Web 3.0, more social media categories are getting added, each with their own characteristics, strategies and tools.

Mobility combined with compute power in the CMH is enabling all these categories in the social media ecosystem to be accessed via the CMH, spawning more powerful and versatile tools than Jott, SMS.ac, air-G, Brightkite, CallWave and the like which we presently use.

Not only the traditional web publishing of texts like e-mail, web pages, blogs and wikis, but also texts, audio and video in combination can be done using the CMH. There are apps for professional editing and formatting in numerous fonts including mathematical symbols. Several people in a community can collaboratively publish a common theme to professional standards. For example, you can go to the sophistication of collaboratively creating a documentary movie using only the CMH and Web 3.0.

Micro blogging, a cross between blogging and text messaging, which expresses your thoughts short and purposeful, is an economy of communication that Web 3.0 will continue to encourage but with greater facility through semantic features and AI-supported ‘help’ to make it short while being more purposeful. Reactions from a number of followers will be reverse-tweeted automatically as gists again by AI & semantic supported tools & can be automatically broadcast to all responders almost instantly creating an environment for a sophisticated Delphi-type approach. This can be a very effective decision-making tool to the limits of transparency.

With Web casting, which broad casts information online, you can create live content on CMH and distribute or stream over internet or Broadband Community networks more dynamically on Web 3.0 than ever before, even in 3D or Virtual Reality form.

Syndication with a single click can send your content to your followers soon after publication with vastly superior media aggregators and social bookmarks supporting you. With semantic and AI-based search engines, we will have the means to cope with the Information and knowledge explosion. It is with this that the complexity and diversity of the society, so characteristic in our country, can be addressed. The Web 3.0 based social Media is an appropriate and adequate tool for the creation of social capital and hence social wealth through development which respects inclusion, individual capability maximization, optimum
utilization of scarce resources, appropriate and timely decision making and bottom-up planning.

**Instrument for the Creation of Social Capital**

These social media features can give new applications and instrumentalities which can create social capital in a variety of ways. To understand this, we redefine social capital in a delimited manner suiting the context of the social media.

The definition of social capital in general can be nebulous. We can narrow the context to the optimum use of the Web 3.0 based social media with an illustrative subset of applications: inclusion, capability maximization and bottom-up planning in a socially complex & diverse environment. In this context we can narrowly, but with more clarity, define social capital as a function of negentropy connoting the magnitude of disorder to order transition with ‘order’ denoting sustainable shared knowledge & norms of reciprocity, trust and positive values in a network of relationships between individuals and/or communities which shape the quality and quantity of interactions. Here, we consider social capital as a function of only the human capital consisting, among others, of knowledge, skills and attributes creating personal, social and economic wellbeing as well as the Network capital qualifying interactions which increase community wellbeing. From the development vantage, we consider the components as communitarian, Institutional, Network and also Synergy integrating the previous two. For our delimited applications we can consider social capital as bridging the social and economic perspectives so as to give a better direction for development.

The levels of social capital that can be considered are: Individual Informal Social Groups, Formal organizations, Communities and National.

Within the further delimited context of social media, we use, people and content to find each other through efficient searches afforded by Web 3.0 and make the best use of its tools for the management of content.

Social media on Web 3.0 as an enabler of inclusive education and training for information, knowledge and skill acquisition will also give a new meaning to e-learning and life-long learning, the essential paradigms of the knowledge age. Semantic Web based e-learning will drive distributed computing, collaborative intelligent filtering and 3D (and 4D with time added) visualization and interaction based on CMH amenable to multi-touch screen technology. Self-organization and personalization features will be emphasized. Mash-up and cloud-computing integrated into Web 3.0 will make e-learning more independent of centralized institutional websites. This will make any-time any-place virtual class room and virtual teacher based e-learning a reality with smart solutions to web surfing, content management, and learning management. On top of all these the cost of education and national human resource development will plummet down.

Combined with cloud computing and Reusable component software technologies, the above Web 3.0 based e-learning tools can also lead to the assessment of intrinsic capabilities of all citizens, design a personalized capability enrichment programme and deliver it on the CMH. In general this can be used for a widespread Human Resource Mobilization scheme to empower all citizens inclusively.

**Conclusion**

In a country as diverse and complex as India is, a properly restructured and prioritized social media can act as a catalyst for the creation of the social capital in step with the creation of the economic capital, synergetically reinforcing each other. While acknowledging that the concept & definition of the social capital can be nebulous & daunting a well delimited contextual definition is possible, as illustrated here with reference to the social media. The by and large predictable developments in ICT to the end of the decade are likely to transform the social media into a social network capable of handling India’s diversity and complexity to the extent we can intelligently mobilize it through technological innovation and development which are germane to our social problems and applying these to grass root necessities with proper a priori analysis of ground realities.

Social media can decrease the social capital through entropic applications or can increase it through negentropic applications. Controlling the media can not give sustainable gains in the long run. But, putting into the stream of social media far more applications which increase the social capital than those that decrease it, however, can.

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SOCIAL MEDIA has emerged as a vital tool of communication and has created new ways of mobilizing public opinion and encouraging participation in political and civic activities – ranging from joining online petition and social groups, posting short messages on Twitter, expressing supports through blogs and uploading videos on YouTube. The recent WikiLeaks disclosure online of US foreign policy clearly demonstrates the disruption caused by social media, which is now forcing the mainstream news media to turn to political blogs and citizen-users for materials. Such disruption has enabled citizens to discuss and share political information with friends and networked citizens, and critically monitor the actions of governments and corporate interests. This has also posed a profound challenge to the state about how to regulate social media and face user-generated challenges. At the same time, the uneven level of access of different social groups to new media, a phenomenon known as digital divide, has raised concern about the limitations of its democratic potential.

Can social media be used for an effective political communication in India where access to Internet is still limited? To what extent political parties and candidates as well as oppositional politics are using social media for political campaign? Is it possible to reach to the non-internet users through social media? Before answering these questions it is important to look at some of the statistics about the internet penetration and social media uses in India. A report by the Internet and Mobile Association of India shows that as of June 2012, there were 137 million claimed Internet users: 99 million in urban cities and 38 million in rural villages. Of these 137 million Internet users, 111 million (80 million in urban cities and 31 million in rural villages) are active Internet users, i.e., they use the Internet at least once a month. In terms of percentage, only about 11.4 %of India’s population uses internet, which might not be considered significant.

Similarly, in their recent report entitled “Social Media in India – 2012”, estimates the number of social media users in Urban India at 62 million as of December 2012. The report also reveals that the internet users are spreading fast in areas beyond the top eight Indian metros as one third of the

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social media users are residents of smaller towns with population of under 500,000, while a quarter of them are residents of towns with a population of less than 200,000. However, it is estimated that majority of the social media users use it for entertainment than for political activities, although we do not have data on the behaviour of internet users. The small percentage of the internet users and the users activities on social media, have led many political analysts to discount the capacity of the social media in having any significant impact on political communication. However, one needs to look at the recent uses of social media for political communication before ignoring its credibility.

In the recent assembly election in Gujarat, the chief minister Narendra Modi effectively used the social media to connect with online citizens. Besides being active on Twitter and Facebook, Modi also went for a live chat on Google plus with netizens. By going online for live chat, he became the first Indian politician to do so. Through his social media campaign, he was able to capture the first time voters, the youth, who certainly are more attuned to digital culture. At the same time, the middle classes are also quite active on social media.

Similarly, it is well known that Anna Hazare, in his agitation over the issue of the Jan Lokpal Bill, effectively used the social media to mobilize the youth and the middle classes. The effective use of social media not only brought the issue into cyber space and made it more global, but also garnered huge support for the anti-corruption campaign. The general perception that people use the social media largely for entertainment does not hold true in this case. At the same time, using social media for entertainment doesn’t stop one to use it for political activities. Politics has certainly entered social networking sites, which has opened up new avenues for conducting politics.

What is important to recognize in these two cases is the capacity of the social media to influence traditional media. All newspapers and television now have reporters who continuously monitor Facebook and Twitter for getting breaking news. The way traditional and social media connect and converge with each other has a profound impact on modern day political communication. This connectivity and convergence between traditional and social media becomes imperative in the case of India and other developing countries where the reach of the internet is still limited. Social media, no doubt, is more democratic since anyone with access to the Internet can raise an issue in the public arena. Yet, it would not be possible for social media alone to reach beyond their core audience and influence wider sections of society unless they collaborate with traditional media. Similarly, in order for traditional media to reach out to a transnational audience, they need to take the help of social media. The Anna Hazare movement, which began through social media, got momentum after news channels started providing relentless coverage. Similarly, Modi would not have been successful had he depended exclusively on social media for political communication. It is important therefore to understand different roles played by traditional and social media in reaching to different segments of the population. However, the presence in social media has become imperative for politicians who want to connect with the youth and the middle classes and want to play a larger role in the national political arena.

The coming of social media has certainly had a democratizing effect on the functioning of newspapers and news channels. The earlier monopoly of newspapers and news channels over providing news and breaking stories has been dismantled with the coming and spread of social media. Newspapers and news channels are now operating under the fear of losing their credibility to the social media. It is now difficult for traditional news media to hide a story from the public because of the fear that such stories might get published in a blog or get circulated on social networks. This pressure of the social media has certainly democratized the existing public sphere and enhanced the accountability of public officials. The recent exposure in India of many scandals has become possible because of the social media. Once the issue was exposed on the social media, public pressure started building on traditional media to take up the issue. The exposure of the 2G scam is one such case where the social media played a leading role.

Is there emergence of new ways of conducting politics with the coming of social media? In a recent study conducted by the IRIS Knowledge Foundation and the Internet and Mobile Association of India, claimed that results in over 150 parliamentary constituencies in the next general election could be decided by ‘Facebook users, making them the newest vote-bank with the power to shape Indian politics.’ One might as well question the validity of the findings as majority of the people in India use social media for entertainment. But one needs to understand that political participation is not static. Some people regularly follow political events, whereas others become interested only during a crisis or an important political event, such as an election or social
Among Internet users, substantial numbers may not be interested in the politics of the country or eager to participate in politics through the internet, but they are drawn into politics because a major personality is involved or during a major crisis. The Anna Hazare’s movement reflects that the online public, who used social networking sites for entertainment and to stay in touch with friends, learned to use these sites to engage with politics. Such a development is new in India, but has been ongoing in developed countries. Social media also played an important role in the Arab Spring.

Despite the low level of the internet penetration in India, social media has been able to reach beyond its core audience. This is because of the new space created on account of the interface between print, television and the internet, which can change the way the business of politics is conducted in India. All political parties now have their presence on social media, and maintain their party website detailing the activities and programs of the parties. Majority of politicians have their Twitter account or Facebook pages. We have seen that during major events such as budget sessions or parliamentary debates, politicians break the news by posting a message on Twitter. Social media literacy is fast becoming a sign of forward-looking and development oriented leaders, ready to take up the new challenges in a globalized India. The presence in social media has become imperative for candidates and political parties because of the changing expectation of the voters towards their elected representatives. Realizing the importance of social media, the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh opened his Twitter account last year to provide up-to-date information as well as to present the achievements of his government to the people.

Media, both traditional and social, have certainly emerged as an important institution of mediation in contemporary India as well as in other developing countries and has transformed today’s political communication networks. Making one’s presence felt in social media has become important for both political parties as well as for oppositional politics in order to ensure wider validation for their cause. The incorporation of politics into social networking sites has made it impossible for political parties to ignore social media. Furthermore, given the changing expectation of the voters towards their elected representatives, social media might play a role disproportionate to its actual presence. Social media certainly has the power to influence the outcome of the next general election.

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**NORTH EAST DIARY**

**Road Projects Worth Rs 1,933 cr Sanctioned for Assam**

The Central Government has cleared three major long pending road projects for Assam worth over Rs 1,933 crore recently. The three road infrastructure projects are envisaged to cut travel time from Nagaon to Dibrugarh and beyond. The projects would also increase the employment potential for local labourers for project activities.

The First project is four-laning of the Demow-Bogibil junction section of National Highway-37 in the state under the Special Accelerated Road Development Programme in North Eastern Region (SARDP-NE). The cost is estimated to be Rs 473.45 crore.

The project is envisaged to expedite the improvement of infrastructure in Assam and also reduce the time and cost of travel for traffic, particularly heavy traffic, plying between Guwahati and Dibrugarh. It will also increase employment potential for local labourers for project activities. The project covered Dibrugarh and passes through the towns of Numaligarh, Dergaon, Jorhat, Jhanji.

The second project includes four-laning of the ‘Jorhat-Demow’ section of National Highway-37. The cost is estimated to be Rs 874.69 crore. The length of the road will be approximately 80 km. The four-laning of the ‘Numaligarh-Jorhat’ section of National Highway-37 is estimated cost be Rs 584.68 crore. The length of road will be approximately 51 km.

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Recent technological innovations put the tools of production of media content in the hands of common man. It allows anybody with access to the Net to reach across to millions. It gives voice to erstwhile voiceless. Access to these tools empowers the powerless.

For the traditional large corporate media houses, however, it has been very disempowering. Grandmothers start chitchatting with their grandchildren on the other part of the world, disregarding their favourite serial - because that is the best time to interact with people on the other part of the world. Young householders living in rented flats are attending to their virtual farms and decorating their virtual houses, fulfilling their instincts and dreams. Young children making up animation stories using applications in iPad... Attracting eyeballs to any mass entertainment has never been more difficult.

From the traditional mass media point of view, the new media is seen as merely another platform for delivery. But the new media is much more than that. It is a platform for interactions, conversations, searching, creating and sharing. Sharing is a two way process but media delivery is a one way street. The traditional business models for media are not yet really ready for this transformation.

Challenges to traditional media

The netizens today can now read a large number of newspapers, listen to a very large number of radio stations and see TV shows galore - without touching paper or a transistor radio or buying a TV. The choice of media content is now in the keyboards of the media consumers connected to the net - irrespective of geographic/linguistic boundaries. The large variety of choices fragments the mass base of a media channel even more. Worse, in any case, than what happened to TV medium in the 90s with the satellite television boom.

Here is a situation where the readers wanted to be read, the listeners want to be heard, the viewers want to be seen. This is unprecedented. Letters to the editor or feedback of listeners and viewers including “request shows” that announce the names and cities of the requesters in the name of “interactivity” had limits of allocated space or time. The
new media removed those barriers. And suddenly, the traditional mass media was losing out on viewers, listeners and readers.

So the mainstream media tried to overcome the adversity by proactively co-opting the new content to face the threat. UGC - not University Grants Commission, but User Generated Content - became a buzz word in the media Industries during the last decade. Al Jazeera and BBC vied with each other to showcase videos from video sharing sites. But the growing number of netizens would rather see the videos shared by their friends in Facebook. Or see channels and shows of their choice, at their convenience rather than be bound to couches at broadcast timings. The new subscriptions to cable is falling in many developed markets. And old subscribers are cutting cables.

The media landscape is changing.

Response to Challenges

Radio did not wipe out print media. Radio and print media survived the satellite television revolution by re-adjusting the media consumption habits. But just as the growth of consumers stagnated and reversed before the older mass media evolved to meet the challenges of the new media in the past, the future too will retain the old platforms for distribution of media.

However, what did not happen earlier, is the entry of a large number of consumers who turned into producers with the new technological tools for social discourse. Bloggers, podcasters and netcasters became the new age entrepreneurs. They did not need even a garage, as in the entrepreneurs that developed the IT tools, but just a desktop and a keen vision of the content that compels consumption.

The mainstream media responded.

Flogging citizen journalists for the lack of code of ethics or training was but an initial knee-jerk reaction. It had to be dropped because the argument applied to mainstream media professionals too. Fact checking is not practiced quite often by mainstream media: too much of a bother and it comes in the way of breaking news...

So journalists and broadcasters were given their own space for blogging, twittering, ... - it became a part of the job description. But then, the media professions were already quite volatile with a propensity to job hopping. And they took the readership, listenership and viewership along with them, when they left. Some could even strike out on their own and earn advertising revenues.

The underbelly of the mammoth media houses is being exposed: advertising industry is redistributing their pennies. The smaller portion of advertising pie hurts more than the fragmentation of the mass audiences.

Changing power structures

The transition of the media landscape from the state owned, state controlled media to the development of an independent, though commercial profit oriented media, had transformed many societies. The pluralism of voices contributed to the development of a democracy that responded to at least the voices of the rich and the powerful.

Putting the media tools in the hands of the middle class has suddenly increased the number of voices. The clamour is growing into a din. The political class is now forced to respond. Many leaders responded by jumping into the bandwagon of blogging and twittering, adding to the cacophony. But unlike the earlier decades, the citizens themselves have their voice. And it could be raised on behalf of the less powerful or less privileged. Against injustices and inequities. People could be amassed on the street through exhortations on the Internet... Social activism had new tools: new walls to write on. Middle east reverberated with the will to political transformations into newer democracies.

The challenge faced by politicians and business persons is now creating a new employment niche of new media “experts”. Powered by a netbook and dongle, the propaganda machinery is quite often manned by twenty-somethings. The press officers have a difficult task cut out for them.

During the Nehru era, keeping track of a few national dailies - mostly English ones - was enough. By the time Indira Gandhi came to power, the vernacular press was quite attention worthy. But when there are voices from a few million households that cannot be disregarded without political (or business) disaster, democracy becomes firmly embedded in the society.

Previously marginalised sections of people - like gay and lesbians or supporters of cannabis use - have started coming out and forcing changes in the laws of the land. Gender inequality and patriarchal, parochial attitudes are being questioned in public forums... Corruption, accepted by generations
as a fact of life, suddenly became a rallying point.

By changing the very structure of the fourth pillar of democracy, social media redefines and enriches democratic discourse. But then, simultaneously it blurs national borders. Social media is forging relationships that transcend kinship, creed and country. Nationalism, the foundation on which a strong democracy can be built is no more stable or dependable as focal points for social development. Is a new kind of democracy evolving? Is it really possible to separate voting, having a voice and opportunities to participate in socio-economic development, previously integral to the concept of democracy?

Amplification of information and its diffusion in space through the printed media and the diffusion of information through waves in time, as happens in broadcast media, are quite different from the packet switching and amplification in a network. Early morning rituals of reading newspapers - the same news that most of your neighbours read, news selected by a staff or a stringer, subedited, edited, laid out and printed, distributed by a publisher. The old system of being entertained by the same serial (Buniyad or Ramayan) as everybody else, at the same time. These phenomena may not entirely disappear. But today more people are consuming a wide diversity of media content. Because there is a diversity of content being produced. Not because of the will to control, nor the will to get rich, but to fulfill the need to interact, communicate, share... And these activities are creating communities, new niches in social environment.

The flow of information in space and time in a network cannot be understood by either diffusion or wave models. The mathematical understanding of networks, physics of networks and technological frameworks on which the Internet works presently, would of course, be subsumed by a new world order of fractal structures. At least that is what theoretically we must expect.

The flow of viral videos and continuous flow of “forwards” create a new brand of leaders and followers of the information society. “Status” in this society depends on information and communication rather than money - yet it wields power. The more “connected” the nodes, the less the freedom, restricted by peer interactions. Less the degrees of freedom, less the degrees of separation.

From the sword to pen to camera and keyboard, the shift in social perceptions of what is mighty and great is but a natural transformation. From the kings’ scribe to paid journalist to the narrator of one’s life, work and society: the sources for tomorrow’s historians is being generated at a very rapid pace in magnetic and optic media inscribed 0s 1s, in digital space.

Enriching the narratives

The threads of conversations, photographs, shared jokes, information, weave a pattern of interactions that are quite human. That cannot be coded in 0s and 1s. Food, sex, social dominance and identity as well as other human concerns - health, education, ... - would obviously emerge as the mainstay of the narratives. Talking at cross purposes and hate speech also would be as common in the virtual world as it is in the real world. Cyber attacks and malware are testimony that it is we who create the virtual world. You will find scammers and thieves equally on highways as much as on the information highway.

Social media permits multiple identities - tribal, feudal, regional, linguistic, national, religious, ... It satisfies the material impulses/ instincts to be satisfied by proxy, in the virtual world. The very nature of the network allows hierarchical and horizontal connections with others. Six degrees of separation will perhaps soon be overcome by less than six clicks.

Anthropologists argue that the rise and fall of civilisations of the past were caused by climatic changes. This climatic change in media is unifying human civilisation by creating a digital memory networked across the earth. In social ecology new niches are possible, and a larger variety of sub-cultures are evolving. The dependence of cultural diversity on geographies has been overcome by the tools of social media.

Just like the transportation networks disrupted the feudal and even family structures, the Internet is also a disruptive technology. Unlike the network of roads, electric lines, telephone lines, the Internet is a network of networks. Control or regulation by the state is limited to blocking of sites. Mirrors of sites with alternative URLs circumvent the attempts at even that. It would take all Governments of the world to come together to create any reasonable regulation. In other words, a world government.

Imagine - in all its diversities, world will be one. And I am not the only dreamer.

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ECONOMICS (MAINS)
17th JUNE, 10.30am

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2. Prashant Kumar
3. Nitesh Thakur
4. Ms. Dakshyani Thakur
5. Ms. Alka Jeph
6. Ms. Geetanjali
7. Ms. Jyoti Tamta
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The term social media is being used quite often by everyone and has become a popular topic of conversation, debates and controversies. Contrary to popular belief and perceptions of the general public, social media is not just restricted to sites like Facebook and Twitter. Social media, in fact, encompasses all the web services that facilitate creation, sharing and exchange of user-generated content. These include but are not restricted to Internet forums, groups, blogs, microblogs, networking sites, social bookmarking sites, wikis, podcasts, content communities for articles, video/photo sharing sites, Q & A sites, review sites and so on and so forth, the list is endless. The number of people accessing and using the social media is increasing exponentially day by day. But how many of us truly understand what social media is and the effect it has on people as individuals and the society at large.

The overall benefits, positive effects or the wide scope of usage of the social media are limitless. It has become quite evident, and proved beyond doubt, that the social media is a very powerful tool that, if used in the correct manner, can bring about tremendous changes in any facet of life and be beneficial to mankind in multiple ways.

Businesses have understood this potential of the social media and are using it effectively for various purposes that include marketing, customer relations, supply chain management, engaging their customers and providing useful information about the business and details about their products or services through websites and blogs. Interacting directly with the customers not only generates loyalty but also gets the kind of feedback that they need to improve their products or services.

Individuals are using the social media in their own different ways to interact and connect with people, get in touch with old friends, share media files / content / documents, personal views, opinions, comments and even personal photos on social networking sites with like minded people / communities / groups.

We need to guard against the negative impact of the social media, which ought to be used in the correct manner for creative or productive purposes so that it is progressive to mankind and society at large, rather than regressive.

Varinder Taprial
Priya Kanwar

The authors have jointly authored a book on social media.
Making the accessibility to social media even easier, today’s smart phones are integrated with the most popular networking sites and also offer popular free apps that can be downloaded easily to chat, message, upload photos and videos that can be shared instantly online with friends or contacts, making it much more easier to stay connected and updated on the latest happenings. Also, since most smart phones are economically priced, it is easily affordable for a large segment of population.

Today, students of school and college can use the social media to their advantage in many different ways. In fact, due to the advancement in technology, it has become important for each and every student to know how to use the technology effectively and be well versed with all aspects of it since more and more employers are beginning to check the social media background of a potential employee. Thus, knowledge and proper utilisation of the social media gives the student an edge over others in the market. They can use the social networking sites to connect with people from their study or work group and interact with peers or teachers directly. By using the Internet for academic purposes, students learn much more than they can in a classroom and their ability to assess, analyse, retain and share information improves dramatically.

Perhaps the biggest positive impact of the social media has been in its ability to mobilize and get support from the masses towards various social causes all over the world. The “Arab Spring” is a case in point where the social media was used effectively to organise, communicate and raise awareness in the face of state attempts at repression and Internet Censorship. This wave has resulted in overthrowing the incumbent regimes from Tunisia, Libya, Yemen and Egypt. Indian social activist, Anna Hazare used the social media effectively to organise and gather support from the masses to protest against corruption and to get the government to pass an anti-corruption Bill in the parliament. Thus the true potential and the power of the social media to bring about political changes and revolutions came to light.

Negative aspects of social media

However, every coin has two sides, the good and the bad. Similarly, the social media is also a two-edged sword. Where there are so many positive aspects to the social media, there are bound to be negative aspects as well. Probably the most worrying aspect to the social media is the fact that it cannot be controlled and therefore it goes without saying that its consequences can also be dangerous and uncontrollable for all those who use it recklessly and in an irresponsible manner. It is said that, “unless you take control of social media, you risk social media taking control of you.”

The very nature of social media, providing the prospect of enhanced social interaction, presents an opportunity for the user to speak up and be heard without being interrupted, thereby making social media seem interesting and addictive at the same time. This is what lures people into embracing the social networking with a vigour. However, the continued activity on social media has its own pitfalls, which may not be evident, and we as a society need to be wary of the impact these can have on individuals in particular and society in general.

Communication and Relationships

Social media and networking sites have changed the way we communicate with each other. On one hand, social media has expanded a person’s reach and enabled faster and cheaper communication; on the other hand, these same channels of communication are killing “real” communication between people.

The obsession to stay updated, coupled with lack of time has resulted in many people using these networking sites to look for faster ways of conveying their message. So it is common now to find sentences filled with an array of acronyms and emoticons. Microblogging sites like Twitter have restricted number of characters that can be posted in the status, as a result of which, people have to come up with innovative ways to express themselves using as few words / characters as possible. Now, a general trend that is observed is the way people just cannot seem to express their thoughts or expressions in the form of complete sentences. Thus affecting the language skills in various people, especially children.
Ever since the networking apps started appearing on mobile phones, the time one would spend on social media has also gone up with people checking their accounts frequently. In essence, the social media in combination with the mobile technology has made the communications and relationships also virtual. They are there, but still not there. There is no real meaningful communications taking place, just an acknowledgement to the other’s presence. This culture has also moved on to the households and playgrounds.

As a result of this phenomenon of over-communication with people online and on networking sites, we are slowly drifting away from “real” interactions with people and becoming isolated within us and are perpetually living in a virtual world. The ease with which we can connect with everyone online can give us a false sense of intimacy of the true relationship with those people. We may think that the digital relationships so formed are more intense, committed and complete than they really are. Thus we run the risk of alienating the very people who surround us in our daily life in pursuit of intimacy with our online friends.

Several studies have also shown that our online interactions can have a direct impact on our moods and thereby on our behaviour with other people. The social media moodiness will have an immediate effect on our behaviour or response to those around us, thereby indirectly affecting the relationships.

**Psychological Aspects**

Several studies are now bringing out the narcissistic effect of social media. Apparently, there is a rise of narcissism amongst the generation born in the 1980s and 1990s, controversially dubbed as “Generation Me” by Professor Jean M. Twenge in 2007. In fact, over the last couple of years, extensive research has shown positive connections between Facebook and narcissism. This may stem from the way people use Facebook to look important, look special, gain attention, status and self-esteem, thus presenting an unrealistic portrait of themselves. These people can be identified easily as the ones who post numerous attractive looking photos of themselves, then tag themselves and others in the photo to gain attention, likes and comments, and also update their statuses more frequently. This aspect gives rise to voyeurism. Recently, a psychology paper (published in the journal *Personality and Individual Differences*) found increasing evidence that young people are becoming increasingly narcissistic, and obsessed with self-image and shallow friendships. All individuals who are dependant on the social media are so because they receive some sort of self-gratification, which soon becomes addictive.

Frequent networking on sites like Facebook could also generate negative feelings like inadequacy, envy, jealousy or even aggressive behaviour due to constant comparison with their own colleagues /friends or peers who always “appear” to be better off. Facebook is flooded with photos of people looking very happy with life, partying with their long lost friends or families, travelling to exotic destinations, or simply showing off their riches in the form of pictures of their flashy cars, stylish homes or yachts etc. Women, who are slim and know they look good, post pictures of themselves in stunning outfits. All these facts are bound to have some kind of psychological impact on others who feel that they are “lesser” or inadequate in some manner or the other. These comparisons can make our successes feel diminished and our failures amplified.

There is also the effect of “peer” pressure when it comes to being active on social media sites. Some people logon to these sites only due to the fear of “losing out” on the latest happenings within their circle of friends. For, if you do not keep in touch then you may end up being isolated from the group, become outcast and find yourself lonely. Thus, social media is soon becoming a “drug” of choice among the school and college going crowd.

Constant networking can cause distractions, especially for children and college students who find it difficult to pay attention to their academics and therefore end up getting lower grades. Also, spending long hours in front of the computer or with electronic devices can cause serious health problems, strain the eyes and also causes the person to get lethargic. Keeping awake late nights can lead
to sleep deprivation and physical stress and fatigue. This also results in a lack of concentration or ability to focus and or prioritise important issues in their daily lives.

As pointed out earlier, smart phones integrated with camera / video and networking features allows people to capture photos / videos and instantly share them via email, messaging services, bluetooth or by directly uploading them on several networking sites in one go. Some people may not think twice before they upload photos taken at a wild party or at private social gatherings, but it may turn out to be embarrassing for another person. The same can be said for videos and or mms recorded on mobile devices that could be misused by anyone for the wrong reasons. Needless to say, such actions could have disastrous consequences. Recently, there were news reports of nude photos of the Royal couple (Prince Williams and Kate Middleton) that were uploaded on Facebook, YouTube and many other sites on the Internet. This is just an example of how this media can be misused by others.

Safety Considerations

A serious drawback to these kind of free communication channels that are open to one and all comes in the form of cyber bullying. Unfortunately, this is becoming a common trend among teenagers on social networking sites. Calling names, ridiculing, making fun of people and using abusive language has become commonplace. This form of cyber bullying can have dangerous consequences, if left unchecked, as has been proven many times where young children have committed suicide on account of such incidents.

Social media also promotes anonymity, albeit unintentionally. Hiding behind a fake name or remaining anonymous gives people a bolder online persona than they would otherwise have in their normal face-to-face relationships with people. Some of these people have criminal intentions and may be looking for “gullible” people online whom they could lure into their web of deceit. They could use your personal data or information and even photos for dubious purposes. There are often sexual predators lurking behind fake identities that try to lure young innocent adolescents or even kids to satisfy their perverse desires.

Most networking sites do not really protect an individual’s privacy. A simple example is that of photos being posted on such sites without taking permission from all the people concerned. Is it legal to do that? Some people may feel that it’s okay, since it’s being done just for fun or to get a few laughs. In the year 2010, a 22-year old guy named Messy Mya was shot dead around 8 PM as he was returning from his girl friend’s baby shower. Messy Mya was a New Orleans YouTube sensation known for being humorous while ridiculing random people in the New Orleans area. Insult was added to injury when an onlooker posted the picture of his body on Twitter raising a huge uproar and controversy.

Reliability of Content

Everyone is free to post any kind of content on the social media. There is no authenticity of the data posted nor can everything be taken on its face value. People are generally very generous when it comes to sharing content within their network without verifying the veracity of the data therein. The information could be related to health, medicine, religion etc and could end up harming someone or hurting someone’s sentiments. Unchecked sharing spreads misinformation as fast as the speed of light since people tend to believe anything sent by a connection/friend.

Social Media, with all its benefits and the potential for more, is definitely a boon to our world, however misuse or irresponsible usage can have negative affects on individuals and society, especially the young impressionable minds. We need to guard against the negative impact of the social media, which ought to be used in the correct manner for creative or productive purposes so that it is progressive to mankind and society at large, rather than regressive.

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Social Media in Education – Help or Hindrance?

Atul Pant

The conversation, collaboration, coherence, global reach, scalability and low-cost dimensions that social media offer can be a boon for meaningful, effective and engaging education for all, provided they are used prudently.

In the era of Mahabharata, the supreme teacher Dronacharya refused to take Eklavya, a tribal prince, under his tutelage because he was not of royal lineage. So Eklavya made a statue of Dronacharya and practiced archery seeking inspiration from the clay statue.

Imagine Eklavya today

A student as committed and passionate as Ekalvya could easily find a guru on a MOOC (massive open online course), or on an open educational resource like Academic Earth.org. Finding a virtual guru would be just the first step in the student’s learning journey. Whole-hearted participation and commitment, even in a free online course has the potential to open many new doors as Amol Bhave, a 17-year-old student from Jabalpur discovered. On 14th March 2013 Amol got the news that he had been accepted to MIT after scoring 97 per cent on MIT’s MOOC (www.edx.org) on circuits and electronics.

Acquisition of knowledge and deepening understanding in a discipline is no longer confined to traditional formal institutions of education. Today, passionate participation in online communities can lead to mastery and also build a reputation that has the potential to open unimaginable possibilities. Advent of ‘ICT-based social media’ has significantly accelerated innovation in learning and education.

Imagine an alien, who first visited planet earth in early 11th century and went to see the first university in Bologna. If this alien had come back to an institution of higher education in the 19th century what change would it have found? Not much!

Hardly anything changed in the context of formal education in 900 years. Not only the constituent elements – a teacher, some learners, a classroom, learning content, examinations and some form of certification persisted, even the way education was imparted did not undergo much change and remained teacher-led and didactic.

It is only since late 20th century, with Internet becoming easily accessible and cost-effective and mobile...
telephony becoming ubiquitous, that delivery of learning experiences is undergoing innovation.

High bandwidth and pervasiveness of devices that can connect to the Internet and display content in multiple formats has led to the proliferation of ‘social media’, which has in turn facilitated easy creation and prodigious sharing of enriched and enhanced learning experiences. A learner facilitator can today personalize a learning experience to a large extent, make it suitable to learners with different types of intelligences (Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligences theory), different styles of learning (David Kolb’s experiential learning theory) and share it across time and space.

When I use the term ‘social media’ I am not referring to famous platforms like Facebook and Twitter alone, instead I use the term to mean any ICT-based community where user-generated content can be co-created, shared, discussed and re-purposed. It is important to understand this distinction because some years back ‘the social media’ website was ‘My Space’ and that is disappearing into oblivion now. Hence, while it is difficult to predict the future of YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, it is safe to say that emerging technologies and platforms will only accelerate the pace of disruption that has taken place in education.

Even for non-formal learning like cultivating a hobby, new media offers a plethora of learning resources in multiple formats to suit different types of learners. Enthusiasts share their knowledge, best practices and tips on YouTube, Slideshare and Twitter. Experts curate learning resources in their area of expertise and make them available on websites like Pinterest, ScoopIt and Learnist. Teachers are sharing free tutorials on Udemy and WizIQ. Most of these savants are even willing to engage in a dialogue on a discussion forum, Facebook, or Google group to help solve specific issues their followers raise. Some are even keen to form informal online learning communities.

The key question is, “Does ICT-based social media” augur well for education?

Among the naysayers is American author Nicholas Carr, who in his book, “The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains?” argues that while Internet improves our cognitive ability to skim and scan, it diminishes our intellectual capacity to concentrate and contemplate. Internet gradually makes us incapable of long form reading and long hours of intellectual focus. This supports Canadian philosopher of communication, Marshall McLuhan’s observation that – media are not just means of communication, they also shape the process of thought.

Skeptics of social media in education also include many teachers and parents, who believe that just like television and video games, social media has only added to the pile of distractions that compete for learners’ attention today. They also worry about the added problem of wrong influences, undesirable peer pressure, bullying and time wasting that sometimes happens on social media.

Those in disagreement with these arguments point out that skimming and scanning are important cognitive strategies essential for the information-abundant era we now live in as they help us quickly sift through the deluge of information to find knowledge gems. Of course, after we have found quality knowledge resources we still need the ability to concentrate, contemplate, formulate questions and apply the knowledge in novel contexts for deeper comprehension. Thus, need of the hour is to cultivate both skimming and scanning, as also concentration and contemplation.

In her book ‘The Power of Mindful Learning’, Ellen Langer explains that the natural state of the mind is to seek variety. To pay attention to something for any amount of time, the stimulus must be varied. For example, we usually have no difficulty in paying attention to play because in play novelty is inherent – every minute of a tennis match is different, while in a five-day cricket test match often our attention wanders because the stimulus is not changing fast enough. When we create novelty in a stimulus we make it more interesting and hence do not get distracted. The lesson for education is that we can use social media to design learning experiences where the stimulus is more than just a teacher lecturing, by adding online discussions, debates and collaborative ‘to-do’ activities.

When we closely analyse why we get distracted we better understand the anatomy of attention and this insight can help us craft more engaging learning experiences, borrowing elements from games, television and other so-called distractors. A good example of combining the power of television with learning is the free online course created by Open University, UK. The course is a continuation of the popular BBC TV series, ‘Frozen Planet’ - http://www.open.edu/
openlearn/whats-on/ou-on-the-bbc-frozen-planet. The course could be further supplemented with games, quizzes and discussions to form an online learning community using social media.

To gauge the impact of social media in the context of education in depth, let’s look at the objectives of education and consider if social media helps achieve these objectives or proves to be a hindrance.

One objective of education is knowledge acquisition in a domain, leading to deeper comprehension, mastery, creativity and value creation (value creation in turn yields financial and social returns). This objective includes building the power of reasoning and expression. Another objective is learning for the sheer joy of it because learning is so self-satisfying. A third objective is self-development – character building or inner maturity and self-awareness about body, mind, emotions and inner strength. Such self-development leads to harmonious living with the environment, with fellow human beings and long-term wellbeing and happiness of the individual.

The first objective of education – knowledge acquisition, deeper understanding and mastery of one or more knowledge domains, leading to creativity, innovation and value creation, definitely benefits from social media. Conversation and collaboration are two essential ingredients of deeper comprehension. Only when we discuss and debate, become aware of different perspectives and apply our knowledge practically do we understand the topic of study well and gain self-confidence. As Seth Godin has put it in his book, “Stop Stealing Dreams – what is school for?” schools are not about, “collecting dots, but about connecting dots”. Social media can help learners connect the dots.

Social media also provides an effective platform for developing the power of reasoning and expression. Conversations, discussions and heated debates done on discussion forums, or as ‘comments’ posted under a nugget of learning content (say comments under a YouTube video or a SlideShare presentation) lead to better understanding. Multimedia nature of social media allows expression in varied ways. Learners can present their understanding of a topic of study as a presentation, video, animation, interactive story, cartoon, simulation, or a game.

For example, MIT’s Scratch (www.scratch.mit.edu) is a free and easy to use tool for young learners to express themselves in multimedia narratives and simple interactive games. Scratch also has a social dimension. It has millions of users and projects. Learners can share what they have designed and also interact with other learners who may further build on their creation, duly acknowledging the source. Scratch also has a community for teachers to share how they are using Scratch in their classroom – www.scratched.media.mit.edu

Of course, on high traffic websites the conversation can become frivolous. But with a combination of strategies like selecting an appropriate platform (for example, creating a Facebook type social environment for students using the free platform, Edmodo), limiting who can participate in the community and moderating the discussions, focus and quality of the conversation can be maintained.

Collaborative learning activities can be taken to a different orbit on social media. When I was studying in a school in New Delhi, we had a student exchange programme with a US school. We would do projects like ‘Streets of Delhi’, or ‘A Visit to Humayun’s Tomb’ and send our photos and journals to the US school. They in turn would send similar information about their city to us. But such projects happened only once a year. Today, a school or a college can easily find institutions across geographies and initiate dialogue to forge partnerships for collaborative learning. Such initiatives will lend a highly diverse and multi-cultural perspective to learning. For example, the World Peace Game foundation (www.worldpeacegame.org) has taken some initial steps for collaborative game play amongst young students across nations.

On social media the overhead cost of online collaboration is so low that even individual teachers or students themselves can take initiative and explore co-creation and collaborative learning opportunities, especially if their educational institute is mired in bureaucracy.

The underlying question here is whether learning is best done solo or is it more effective as a social experience. In my opinion it should be a right balance between introspection and collaboration. Thus, social media should be incorporated in the right dose in the education mix, such that conversation and collaboration lead to better meaning making and the intrinsic motivation that online communities offer by providing
regulation’ (you don’t want to learn
spectrum that goes from ‘external
the theory human motivation is a
theory of motivation. According to
objective is the self-determination
the sheer joy of it. Undergirding this
objective of learning – learning for
this as a welcome challenge vs. fear
the next level but the player takes
performs well he or she moves to
Think of the difference between
assessment is usually less daunting
performance itself. Such embedded
assessment gets embedded into
level of understanding and the
learners demonstrate their
knowledge in multiple ways
and multiple performances of
understanding should be made
possible.

Social media also offers the
possibility of better forms of
assessment of deep understanding.
Application of knowledge in novel
contexts and in finding creative
and innovative solutions is a
better test of comprehension than
recall and regurgitation of facts
in an examination. According
to educational psychologist,
Howard Gardner, for deeper
understanding learners need to be
given opportunities to represent
their knowledge in multiple ways
and multiple performances of
understanding should be made
possible.

Social media allows both. Being
multimedia in nature it allows
knowledge to be represented in the
form of text (blogs), presentation
(Slideshare), stories (Scratch),
cartoons (ToonDoo), video
(YouTube) and more. In creating
such an e-Portfolio on social media
the learners demonstrate their
level of understanding and the
assessment gets embedded into
performance itself. Such embedded
assessment is usually less daunting
than an additional assessment.
Think of the difference between
a game where only when a player
performs well he or she moves to
the next level but the player takes
this as a welcome challenge vs. fear
of examinations.

Let’s consider the second
objective of learning – learning for
the sheer joy of it. Undergirding this
objective is the self-determination
theory of motivation. According to
this theory human motivation is a
spectrum that goes from ‘external
regulation’ (you don’t want to learn
but do it because someone wants
you to do to it), to ‘introjection’
you learn because it enhances
your status), to ‘identification’ (you
don’t really enjoy learning but do
it because you see value in doing it
e.g. studying math), to ‘integration’
you learn because it aligns with
your goals and aspirations) and
finally to ‘intrinsic motivation’
(learning for the joy of it).

According to psychologist
Robert White, the master motivator
for humans is pursuit of personal
competence or mastery. The three
pillars of intrinsic motivation
enunciated in the self-determination
theory of motivation, which author
Daniel Pink succinctly describes in
his book ‘Drive’, are - ‘autonomy’
- the urge to direct our own lives,
‘mastery’ - the desire to get better
and better on things that matter to
us, and ‘purpose’ - a yearning to
do something larger than our self-
interest.

Incorporating social media
in education can help move a
learner from being extrinsically
motivated to intrinsically motivated.
Reputation is the currency of social
media as a history teacher found
out. She tried using role-playing
in her classroom to make history
lessons more engaging but got
a lukewarm response from her
students. Until she told them that
she has taken permission from the
school and she would videotape the
student’s performance and put it on
YouTube, where it would be shared
with other students in the school
and with parents.

Now that students’ reputation
was at stake, that too on YouTube
where their friends outside school
could also view their performance,
their motivation rocketed. Even
though the students only moved
from ‘external regulation’
to ‘introjection’ they took one
step forward in the motivation
spectrum.

The key point here is that social
media offers all the three pillars
of self-motivation – autonomy
(learners can independently take
initiative), mastery (through multiple
representations and multiple
performances of understanding)
and purpose (learners can apply
their knowledge and skills to a
cause that appeals to them) and
can take a learner from being
eextrinsically motivated to being
intrinsically motivated to learn and
perform.

In the book, “Hanging Out,
Messing Around, and Geeking
Out – Kids Living and Learning
with the New Media” the authors
explore how teens engage with
and learn from social media and
suggest a three level participation
framework: ‘Hanging Out’ (making
friends), ‘Messing Around’
(learning basic media literacy, for
example how to make a Facebook
page look better) and ‘Geeking Out’
(more sophisticated digital content
creation like games).

Social learning theories like
Vygotsky’s ‘Zone of Proximal
Development’ and ‘More
Knowledgeable Other’ that
propound that learners learn by
observing experts who model
expertise; and Lave and Wenger’s
‘Situated Learning Theory’ that
explains how in ‘Communities
of Practice’ a participant who is
not very actively involved in the
community but observes well is a
‘legitimate peripheral participant’
who also learns, further strengthen
the argument for including social
media in education.

Finally, let’s consider the
third objective of education: self-

I have observed that my 11-year old son, when he is participating in online communities, learns himself how being empathetic and helping others leaves him feeling good. Such self-discovery of emotions and how they influence own wellbeing leaves a deeper impact than his parents preaching to him could ever have. Of course, we also have candid discussions at home to help him self-analyze his emotions – how he felt when someone behaved rudely in the community, or cheated, vis-à-vis when someone went out of the way to assist a fellow member. Such family discussions also make sure that he is not being subjected to any negative influences like bullying or bad behavior when he is participating online.

Social media even allows enthusiasts with esoteric interests to find like-minded people and form communities of shared interests and find opportunities for collaboration. For adult learners such collaboration has the possibility of becoming a great opportunity for self-development – confidence building, cultural sensitivity, empathy, self-conviction and importance of equanimity. The same also applies to young learners, just that when they are participating in social media they need a learner facilitator, be it a parent, grandparent, or a teacher, to guide them and make sure there are no negative consequences like bullying or worse.

Even social media based games have the potential for positive influence, provided they don’t become an addiction. In their book, “A New Culture of Learning” authors John Seely Brown and Douglas Thomas explore the future of learning. They make the point that playing an online, multiplayer game like World of Warcraft leads to profound experiential learning and the young players learn many life skills like fair play, teamwork, communication and improvisation. Furthermore, if you become a ‘guild master’ the game becomes a complete course on leadership!

Thus, overall we can say that social media is more helpful than detrimental in fulfilling the basic objectives of education.

Moreover, social media also has great potential to connect isolated teachers. A few years back I got a chance to visit Champawat, a small town 200 k.m. from Haldwani. The objective was to interact with teachers and students in local schools. I found that most of the teachers were really enthusiastic but pretty isolated, except for some linkages with district level educational authorities (and I don’t know how clued in people at the district level are with global emerging trends in education). Almost all the teachers had mobile phones and while we were driving uphill I had noticed that fibre-optic cable was being laid. Connecting teachers in remote areas through social media to form Communities of Practice could be hugely beneficial. It would provide for exchange of ideas and more.

For example, in US some online teacher communities now also facilitate teachers to raise small donations for their classroom projects. On such websites teachers put requests for solutions to problems they are facing, or raise small amounts of money, or seek donations in kind, or find volunteers. Either fellow teachers or other well-wishers come to help. One such example is “Donors Choose – Teachers ask. You Choose” website - www.donorschoose.org

Social media also has the potential to make passionate teachers into rockstars who can impart education to millions. Harvard Professor, Michael Sandel, runs a course on Justice. Few years back his entire course was put online at www.JusticeHarvard.org and tens of thousands of students have now taken this course. Salman Khan of Khan Academy, an educational website that gets more than 6 million learners every month has already become a rockstar teacher. His video tutorials, exercises and learner analytics are now being made available in many international languages, all for free. The bigger point here is that social media based education has the possible scalability and low cost structure to address the ‘education for all’ challenge that high-population countries like India face.

In conclusion, the benefits of social media in education far outweigh the drawbacks and hence there is a need to integrate social media into the educational mix. Of course, social media cannot be considered a panacea for education. There is no algorithm for learning and we need to be conscious of the downsides of deploying social media in education. But the conversation, collaboration, coherence, global reach, scalability and low-cost dimensions that social media offer can be a boon for meaningful, effective and engaging education for all, provided they are used prudently.

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Social media and the society: ‘network self’ and ‘the others’

Santosh K Patra
Arbind Sinha

Moore’s Law: The processing power of the computer double’s every eight months
Gore’ Law: Myth about the internet double in their distance from reality every 18 months

The inclusive growth and positive contribution of the invisible super power of social media is possible if we can keep on emphasizing the 3A factors (Availability, Accessibility and Adoptability) in society

The human civilization has lived with a range of technologies that they invented to make their life more comfortable. As students of communication whenever the authors studied, taught, researched, and wrote on new media it always increased their curiosity to understand the concept called ‘Social Media’ differently. Sometimes this creates a situation when the concept, idea or phenomena of social media, often quoted as a part of new media, remain an unanswered matter, whether this pertains to a technology and technology support or something beyond that. We tried to generate a discussion on social media as a component of new media to understand its various nuances.

As teachers, researchers, and practitioners of new media, our confusion is – where to draw the line of new media between the technology and/or the phenomena. This is not the first time in the history that we witness the dilemma between technology and the impact of the technology on society. Any new technology has to meet the necessary perquisites of its (a) technical validity (b) economic viability (c) social acceptability, and (d) reduction in labour of work. This reminds the work of Heidegger on “the question concerning technology” when he said that the problem is not so much on the existence of technology or the forms it takes, rather our orientation to technology. New media as a technology or our orientation towards the technology is what make the difference in today’s world. As Andrew Feenberg says:

“technologies normally stabilize after an initial period during which many differing configurations compete. Once stabilizes, their social and political implications become clear. But despite decades of development, the internet remains in flux and innovative usage continue to appear. The nature of network is still in question and it is not a fully developed technology”

However, to contextualize the technology, new media, social

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media, and its impact on the society, this essay would attempt to understand and answer couple of questions concerning the technology and engage in the triangular debate on media, new media, and the emerging phenomena called social media in our society. First of all we would like to throw light on the media part of the social media and on how the media itself is shaped through social media. Secondly, the issue of accessibility and adoptability of social media, and finally this essay would attempt to understand the much talked networked effect of social media from the ‘self’ to ‘society’.

**Media to social media through new media**

There are two ways of understanding the media; one is the technological dimension and other is the content and nature of the technology as a medium. Most of the researches connect both technology and content. Discussion on types of media always draws attention of kinds of technology used in any particular type of media. Let us examine the chronology of information and communication media. The appearance of printing has been credited as a major step in the advancement of print technology and the development of western civilization. Charles Babbage, the nineteenth century inventor of calculating machine mentioned that “the modern world commences with the printing press” (as cited in Swade 2000). The next task was to pass on the required and important information to as many people as it can. The answer was mass media – one to many. The travel has been long from a printing press to the virtual world where literally we can connect each and every individual on the planet without a single paper. We have already witnessed this transformational nature of media in a span of time. India also experienced the ups and downs – opportunities, limitations, appreciation, and criticism and reached to a point where it is regarded as ‘Information Rich’ society.

Every technology (media) with its own capabilities in terms of sound, image, and live interaction has played a key role in transforming the media while replacing or subliming with the invention of newer or other media. The emergence of the Internet has offered a digital platform that enables to interact with all the communication features – print, sound, still photos, and videos in an interactive way. This particular feature makes it stand alone from other forms of medium. Today watching an event on TV and discussing about it on social media is not unusual among those who have access to these media.

Thus, the Internet technology is a convergence of all other forms of existing media and brings people together to a common platform, where they not only consume the information but also contribute for the validation of the information. This particular characteristic of the Internet based medium converts it all to the ‘Social Media’. Though internet has a broader implication, the usage of social media is limited to the creation of a virtual platform where people connect, create, and communicate with each other on one particular issue or multiple issues. So social media is described as any website or services that facilitate using a particular media to share an idea, advertise, promote or deliver a content. Media in this sense could be documents (scribd.com), presentations (slideshare.com), photo (flickr.com), or videos (youtube.com). For some reason the mass media (newspaper, TV, radio) seems to use this term often as the umbrella term and it confuses the matter. Social media is a platform and powerful source of information transmission where people with an expertise in a discrete area or with something important to get across are leveraging social media sites to talk to 1.8 billion other people across the world. So this is more communicative than any other forms of media and not an alternative media. This is a platform which is facilitated by one or multiple technology which is sublimed for the end users or audience and a convergence of all kind of existing medium. The scope of social media goes beyond this when we bring the issue of social networking in it, which is most important in today’s mediascape visualised by Arjun Appadurai (2006).

We would not do justice by saying the social media is another form of media or alternative media, rather we would prefer to call it a service provided to the humanity, which does not only integrate information but also integrate humanity across the planet. However, this also brings the age old concern – does the social media bring equality to the mankind or becoming the dividing line between the privileged few and ‘the others’?

**Brings people together or creates ‘the others’**

The social media brings people together, creates an information superhighway by converging all kinds of media together. It is also true that at each point of
the usage of the social media, there is involvement of multiple technologies in a very sublime manner. However the debate of the politics of technology and power structure in sociological literature raises the fundamental questions; Who is at the receiving end? Who are the beneficiaries and who are “the others”?

It would not be wrong to say that social media brings another form of capitalism – ‘information capitalism’. The phenomena of information capitalism can be seen and examined both in the global as well as Indian perspective. True to the Marxian argument that capital plays the role of dividing the society, social media plays the similar role of alienating the ‘developed’ countries against ‘the others’ (underdeveloped countries) in global context and ‘digital natives’ and ‘the others’ in the Indian context. This led to the debate of inclusion and exclusion in the power structure of information superhighway. The sublime technology creates the difference. It has truly been stated that ‘technology has an in-built characteristic of being absorbed by those who have resources to acquire it’. In today’s context there are multiple infrastructure simultaneously contributing to the creation of ‘the other’.

If we go by the report of Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, India now has 121 million Internet users with a population penetration rate of 10%. Another study conducted by IMRB for Internet & Mobile Association of India, out of the 69 %of Indian rural population, only 4.6 %have accessed internet at least once in their lives. In this context only a small section of Indian population can access the information superhighway, which in turn can empower them. At the same time there are little more than 90 %of Indian population excluded from the universe of social media. This is not only marginalizing the so called unprivileged majority but also brings the clear distinction of socio-cultural division within a closely netted network. There has been division among inter communities, cultures and groups but the digital divide creates fraction within the community, culture and groups that has created multiple layers of marginalization within the family, peer groups, and generations etc. and crafted a new form of ‘the other’, which is never discussed at any forum. Now a family can be divided into groups with generation ‘X’ (those who has the accessibility to Internet), and generation ‘Y’ (those who don’t have the accesses to Internet). It has rightly been termed as “Information Rich” and “Information Poor”. This also strengthens the existing forms of all kinds of discrimination in the society in the name of caste, class, marginalized communities, and population. Since last 15 years, though India has seen the rapid growth and penetration of the technology and there are instances of the positive use of these kind of platform to connect the privileged few to debate and discuss on the issues of social inclusion and development, there is no information on how the country has empowered the marginalized section of the society. While attempting to bring people together another form of ‘the other’ has emerged due to use of the information superhighway. This happened in spite of the fact that the first experiment with computers in select schools took place in late 1980s.

However, this does not negate the contributions made by social media in the last one and half decades. In spite of the stigma attached to the accessibility and adoptability of social media and creation of ‘the other’, the new media has contributed immensely by bringing people together and in most cases facilitated to go beyond the individual self. It, hopefully, would lead to the integration of the technology with the ‘cell phone’ and would bring ‘the others’ to the information superhighway platform of social media. The ITU reports that there are 771 million mobile phone users in India, which is almost 65 %of Indian population and it is growing at a faster rate. This gives a bigger hope.

Social media: from the self to society

Though this is true that the politics of technology divides the society between the privileged few and the excluded majority, the most unique character of social media ‘networked effect’ can contribute for the creation of a new social order that denies the rule of ultimate power structure. In the process of networked self, the self presentation become an ever-evolving cycle through which individual identity is presented, compared, adjusted, and defended against the constellation of social, economic, cultural or political realities. There is also a possibility that a minority in the privileged few can be the change agent to bring the change in the larger society.

The architecture of the technology that belies these networked platforms of interaction rests upon the principles of
convergence enabling multiple and overlapping connections between varieties of distinct social spheres. The networking on Cairo social movement or the Pink Chaddi campaign for gender equality or the anti-corruption campaign in India is good examples. In the context of individual self in social media or to be specific in social networking sites (SNS), private sphere of sociality are sustained through SNS networked friends, self and others. It is within the architectural plateau that the networked self is actualized, taking advantage of expressive and connective qualities of SNSs. This allows individual self not only to connect with the individual families or friends and acquaintances, but also connects with a networked self beyond the primary network of the self and strengthens the weaker social ties.

In this context social media should be understood as more than a platform with the rule of accessibility where an individual self can make the difference provided there is a networked self, which converged into a collective behavior. This networked self, communicated across collapsed and multiplied audiences, seeks social opportunities for expression and connection. These opportunities take variety of forms, originally generated by relatively autonomous social agents in terms of individual self and connect to the networked self while pursuing for social goals who can’t be ignored.

**Conclusion**

The journey from an alternative media through the lenses of privileged few and majority of ‘the others’ to the networked effect of individual self social media brings an innovative experience of new power structure of information infrastructure and determines other superstructures of the society. However, the dilemma continues with the ever changing nature of technology and issue of accessibility and adoptability from the individual self to networked self. The inclusive growth and positive contribution of the invisible super power of social media is possible if we can keep on emphasizing the 3A factors (Availability, Accessibility and Adoptability) in society. By ensuring the 3A factors in society we can also avoid the emergence of another power structure and creation of ‘the others’.

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Social Media: Tool for Empowering Rural Women

Madhushree Dasgupta Chatterjee

SOCIAL MEDIA has changed the life of 38 year old Mumtaz Biwi, a small entrepreneur and social activist belongs to Mandarpur village of East Midnapur district of West Bengal. This young, energetic and committed lady is now using social media to share her ideas with other groups and also expand her business. Though belonging to an orthodox Muslim family, she wishes to provide proper education to her two children to bestow them the benefit literacy.

Empowerment of women in a knowledge based society like India involves enhancing their ability and skill development to gain insight into the issues pertaining to them, provide them opportunity to overcome social and institutional barriers and strengthening their participation in the economic and political activities so as to being about overall improvement in their quality of life.

Application of various components of social media to further business activities by women folk become evident in Mandarpur village of Ramnagar-II block of Purba Midnapore district of West Bengal. Mandarpur village is the home of Taslima Nasreen Cashew Processing Unit, a self Help Group (SHG) run by Mumtaz Biwi.

Mumtaz Biwi has been on the forefront in the process of initiating a kind of ‘cooperative revolution’ in Purba Midnapore by establishing, running and managing about 180 Self Help Groups (SHG).

Cashew processing is a booming business in Purba Midnapore district where entities such as Taslima Nasreen Cashew Processing Unit imports raw cashew nuts from South Africa besides other parts of the country and after their processing and packaging, export them to various countries around the world.

Mumtaz Biwi, started her group with nine other women giving them an opportunity to empower themselves for the betterment of the society.

Mumtaz Biwi not only supervises the work at the Taslima Nasreen Cashew Processing Unit but actively takes part in the business expansion of Unit by vigorously exploiting various elements of social media to achieve that very purpose. Though Mumtaz Biwi is only a secondary school pass out and suffers from various handicaps such as language barrier and lack of technical know-how, she expertly operates Internet based applications such as E-mail, informative websites and other such facilities to interact with buyers, sellers and suppliers. Tamaltaru Das Mohapatra who is a bachelor degree holder and Upa-Pradhan of Maitana village panchayat of Purba Midnapore’s Ramnagar-II block, assists Mumtaz Biwi in her pursuit to utilize social media to expand her business interests. He admits that through women' especially in the rural areas' have become awakened about various facilities available around them to interact, gather information and enhance their business proficiency' women are still behind men folk and depend on them to achieve their objectives.

Social media also provides an opportunity to widen business contacts as Mumtaz Biwi is known for her self-help group based in Odisha, TamilNadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Mumtaz believed that through social media now it is possible for her to widen her social contacts; know about...
the latest technology of Cashew processing unit along with other facilities. She said that through Internet she is aware of the latest projects in the health sectors and other developmental projects running under gram panchayat. She informed that horticulture department assisted her to begin her group. Raw cashew has been extracted from the forest areas of Maitana, Kaidua Depal gram panchayat. Though it is labour intensive job and required lots of effort, these people headed by Mumtaz Biwi do it steadfastly as per the requirement of their buyers and local business purposes. At first, cashews has to be dried up in the open then put up in the ‘hot house’ to fry the dry cashew. This process requires three days to complete it is again put into another machine to break it up to get cashew nuts from the shell. Finally, the extracted cashew nuts are being packed into 10 kgs Tin boxes for export outside the country and polythene bags of 1 kg for local use of consumption. The whole process of cashew extraction is a tough job for the women but despite these impediments, women like Mumtaz Biwi and continuing to take advantage of social media and empowering themselves and making their presence felt in the society.

Mumtaz Biwi is not only associated with the Cashew processing unit but also with the pulse polio project, nursery, zari tailoring, fishery and other health projects run by the panchayat. Her husband Sheikh Rahman Ali who is also 10th passed helps her to continue her work. It is an example for the rest of the Muslim families in the Mandarpur village that Mumtaz Biwi and her husband cooperating with each other for the development of the society and also motivating other women to come forward for a noble cause.

**Challenges and the Way Ahead**

Women face enormous challenges while using social media for their overall empowerment. Using and benefiting from social media requires a certain degree of education, affordable access to the technology and financial independence to create an enabling environment. Mumtaj Biwi said that lack of content in local languages continues to be a major barrier in women’s use of social media for economic empowerment. To make social media more meaningful and purposeful especially for rural women, relevant information and tools need to be provided to address women’s needs and demands. The group functional block represents the extent to which users can form communities and sub-communities. The more ‘social’ a network becomes, the bigger the group of friends, followers, and contacts.

To achieve these objectives, a clear understanding of how social media can be best suited as a tool for women’s economic empowerment should be developed so that creative solutions can be developed that could enable to promote and facilitate the use of social media to the benefit of women folk. For example, for the women in the informal sector, it is important to allow them to choose the technology they feel most comfortable with.

The potential of cashew processing business for women in Mandarpur village is highly dependent upon their levels of technical skill and awareness of its usefulness and it is the principal requirement for accessing knowledge from the global pool. Government should create enabling environment especially for women folk on the use of social media as a tool for their overall empowerment. It needs to be realized that information and communication technologies by itself cannot answer all the problems facing women’s development and empowerment, but it does bring new information resources to their door steps and can open new channels for communication for marginalized communities.

Mumtaz Biwi obtains information, education, news and other data from electronic and print media. Social media are distinct from industrial or traditional media, such as newspapers, television, and film as they are comparatively inexpensive and accessible to enable anyone (even private individuals) to publish or access information. Industrial media generally require significant resources to publish information as in most cases the articles goes through many revisions before being published. The use of social media for the leader like Mumtaz biwi is a clear platform for educating employees.

In Mandarpur village, Mumtaz Bibi is an example of women empowerment but it is need of the hour for other women to expand their knowledge and business of handicrafts and other rural trade through social media. Mumtaz also extended her thanks to the Birbhum based Institute of Motivating Self Employment to provide training and guidance services in rural trade and other services. She learnt a lot in Institute of Motivating Self Employment where she also came to know about the Bangladeshi Noble laureate, Muhammad Yunus. She believed that like Gramin Bank, her business may create opportunities for the rural women and it can become an continuous process.

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We are constantly being told that we are living in the middle of a digital, social media revolution. An examination of the contemporary political scenario – in India and in the rest of the world, will make it evident that this claim contains at least a grain of truth, however outlandish it may appear at first glance. Recent studies indicate that social networking has emerged as the most popular online activity, world-wide. There are clear indications that the relevance of social media to political life can no longer be doubted. The deployment of Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms in social action, political mobilising and mass uprisings such as the ‘Arab Spring’ have become increasingly common, across the world. This has not been without set-backs, as states have resorted to reprisals when they feel threatened by these new forms of political activism – as a number of Indians who have used Facebook to express a politics of dissent over the last one year, found out to their discomfiture. Even those involved in formal, institutionalised politics have been taken aback by the power of social media. These developments however, cannot be interpreted as a sign that the dynamics of social media would hitherto ‘determine’ political change and revolutions as many are overenthusiastic to conclude. There exists a pressing need for a judicious evaluation of the potential of social media for political activism.

Social media may be simply defined as highly interactive mobile and web-based platforms through which individuals share, discuss, and modify user-generated content as part of a collaborative process of content creation. This can include social networking platforms (such as Facebook and Google+), blogs and micro-blogs (such as Twitter), content communities (such as You-tube), collaborative content creation projects (such as Wikipedia), and even virtual gaming communities (such as World of Warcraft). Needless to say, the expansion of mobile phone coverage has precipitated a social media explosion on mobiles as well. Certainly, some social media forms (especially social networking
platforms and blogs and micro-blogs) may be more pertinent than others in the context of political activism. The subsequent sections of this article focusses on exploring the opportunities and challenges encountered, while examining social media in the context of political activism.

Social Media and Citizen participation

The potential of social media for opening up new spaces for dialogue, debate, and issue-based deliberations, which are free from the mainstream hierarchical and bureaucratic tendencies of the institutionalised political process, has been often celebrated. There have been many experiments in Europe, in this regard, especially in the late 1990s and early 2000s – such as the series of interactive web-based discussions on environmental and planning issues pertaining to a new housing scheme, launched by a couple of independent researchers in the city of Esslingen, Germany; an interactive web-based game on city planning launched by the city planning department of Tampere, Finland; and the Hansard Society’s e-democracy programme in the UK which has been running a series of periodic online citizen consultations on specific policy matters for the UK parliament. However, the experience of most of these initiatives reveal that they are most likely to attract citizens who are already connected to institutionalised political processes, and have not proved to be effective as a means of attracting those citizen-groups who feel alienated from mainstream political processes. Also, such initiatives have generally been most successful when they are used in conjunction with traditional, offline methods of citizen engagement. In the Global South of course, there are a host of other challenges that have to be overcome for effectively utilising social media for eliciting citizen participation: particularly the low levels of literacy and the dearth of public access points to the Internet. This would require the exploration of non-text based forms, as well as the designing of participatory governance processes that seamlessly bridge the online and offline worlds. However, what is clear is that social media does indeed open up a virtual public sphere, which offers the possibility of a hitherto unexplored modality of participation in public, political deliberation – one where citizens can raise their voice in the public sphere without being physically present.

A ‘Speed of light’ praxis

Scholars and activists have pointed out the two-fold potential of social media in transforming the praxis of political activism. Firstly, social media enables the reduction of transaction costs associated with collective action. Secondly, as a recent study of environmental civic associations in Taipei, Hong-Kong and Singapore corroborates, social media offers the opportunity for developing a ‘speed of light’ praxis which emphasises rapid response deliberations and flexible, shifting coalitions; compared to a more ‘traditional’ praxis of slower, associational deliberations, in the sphere of activism.

Some activists and scholars have tended to celebrate the ‘speed of light’ praxis that spawns new, creative modes of mobilisation and protest such as Flash Mobs – of which the SMS-facilitated, rapidly organised mass protest against the suppression of evidence during the impeachment trial of President Estrada in the Philippines, in 2001, is the most well-known. Those with a more cautious bent of mind, have cautioned against the dangers of over-valorising such ‘spontaneous’ acts of political activism – for, such acts, if de-linked from grounded activism have a tendency to degenerate into casual acts of fringe observers seeking low-cost outlets to assuage their guilt of not being adequately invested in the process of social change – leading to mere ‘slacktivism’. Others with a even more skeptical bent of mind, such as Malcolm Gladwell, have gone further, and concluded that social media only fosters a certain mode of spontaneous political organising and protest – typically low-risk actions that do not demand too much investment from the participants. In this view, the claims of the 2009-10 election protests in Iran and the 2009 citizen protests in Moldova over the controversial election win of the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova being ‘Twitter revolutions’ are merely the creation of Western media persons who have no idea of the actual role of Twitter and other social media platforms in the everyday lives of the citizens of these countries. They see social media as largely insignificant in such high-risk political activism.

However, in light of the evidence that the use of social media has in many cases proved to be a matter of life and death – such as the proposed death sentence handed over to one of the bloggers involved in the 2009-10 Iranian protests (since commuted to nineteen and a half
years in prison) – the power of social media to threaten existing regimes of power, when effectively used in mass uprisings and protests, cannot be totally dismissed. Also, the experience of struggles such as the Feministas en Resistencia (Feminists in Resistance) movement in Honduras adds weight to the claim that social media does indeed facilitate a new mode of quick and flexible praxis that is effective in organising mass protests in politically volatile, high-risk situations. In 2009, a military coup overthrew the democratically elected president in Honduras. The Government of Honduras deployed heavy military repression against all demonstrations against the coup. For the first six months after the coup, when state repression was at its peak, the government forcefully influenced all media channels and persecuted the ISP providers. However, in spite of state repression, there were dissenting voices – and most of them had to resort to online spaces for registering their protest against the coup. This was not easy, in a country with low levels of Internet penetration and in a context where the threat of state reprisal was very high. However, activists resisting the coup, including Feministas en Resistencia (Feminists in Resistance), managed to successfully use the Internet as a space for challenging the official accounts of the coup. Feministas en Resistencia (Feminists in Resistance), documented the abuses conducted by the armed forces and broadcast them through a channel on Youtube. In other Latin American countries, women’s groups organised demonstrations at the Honduran embassies in solidarity with the Feministas en Resistencia movement. These global ties that the activists in Honduras forged, saved many lives. In instances where participants in the resistance movement were arrested, their peers tapped into the online communication networks, to initiate global protests against the arrest and co-ordinate global action such as requesting groups from across the world to send in letters and faxes demanding the release of the detainees.

These experiences teach us that strong ties between network members are essential for high risk political activism. However, social media will not inevitably lead to only the creation of weak ties. If rooted in a political culture of on-ground mobilisation and dialogue, and used in conjunction with on-ground deliberative and associational strategies, social media can be used to strengthen strong ties among group members.

Social Media for Conscientisation

In addition to facilitating mass mobilisation and protest, social media can also serve as an effective platform for conscientisation, as demonstrated by the following example. Likhaan, a grass-roots organisation based in the Philippines, which had been at the forefront of a decades-long struggle for a reproductive health law, decided to set up an online magazine in 2010, as a part of its exploration of creating a counter-discourse to the Catholic Church’s discourse on reproductive rights that was dominant in the Philippines’ national public sphere. Through this online magazine, Likhaan aimed at bringing in the accounts of women and youth from marginalised communities who were most in need of sexual and reproductive health services and rights (SRHR), through training grassroots activists in community journalism and ICT skills, and periodically interacting with them to help them channelise their experiences into articles for the magazine. This process helped in enabling these grass-roots activists to build a structural critique from their shared life experiences, and re-affirming their value as political actors. Along similar lines, there have been multiple experiments using Facebook, digital videos and Youtube for awareness-building and conscientisation.

Looking beyond the hype

We now turn to some important areas of concern pertaining to political activism on social media.

1. **The limitations of the virtual public sphere as a space for transformative action**

Many have pointed out that the breaching of the sharp boundaries between the spaces of the ‘public’ and the ‘private’, that social media facilitates through the opening up of the online public sphere, offers numerous empowering opportunities for groups that were hitherto marginalised within the national public sphere. The potential of the spaces of the virtual public sphere to enable the political participation of those groups who are subject to severe restrictions on mobility (especially women) has also been much lauded.

However, not all possibilities opened up by this relaxing of the boundaries of the ‘public’ and the ‘private’, are empowering. For, these new digital spaces may also open up new channels for regressive, fundamentalist forces, furthering existing material and discursive oppression of women.
The controversial ‘Girls Around me’ app is a case in point. This app, which was sold at the Apple App Store last year, until it was voluntarily removed, allowed people to use the location-based social networking service, ‘Foursquare’, to find full names and profile photos of those women in the users’ vicinity who had checked in (to ‘Foursquare’), without acquiring their consent. Clearly, the app is rooted in the stalker ethos.

Though it does not fall within the ‘Social media’ realm, the case of the ‘Radio Mullah’ in Pakistan is also insightful in this context. Radios, with their ability to breach the public-private divide, have been used by Mullah Fazlullah and his Tehreek Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in the Swat Province of Pakistan, to build a constituency of women supporters, by-passing the authority of household patriarchs. However, this by-passing of household level patriarchal controls was only intended to co-opt women into a “perverted version of jihad (holy war)” that led to suppression of female education and the bombing of girls’ schools in the region. Thus, the new spaces opened up by digital technologies and social media platforms are only as empowering as the ideologies guiding their design and use.

The transformative potential of social media platforms and the virtual public sphere, to enable marginalised groups to produce their alternative, counter-discourses, is further hindered by the ‘echo chamber’ effect. To put it simply, this means that in these online forums, individuals can easily avoid engagement with opinions and views that contrast sharply with their own world-views. Thus even though social media offers numerous opportunities for marginalised groups to build their voice, it does not necessarily assure them their right to be heard. This can be achieved only through a strategy that effectively straddles the online and offline domains.

2. Protecting political freedoms

There is ample evidence that states are disconcerted by the opportunities that social media provides citizens with, for political debate, organising and dissent. We have seen states instituting large-scale Internet clamp-downs (like the November 2012 Internet shut-down in Syria), and carrying out large-scale filtering such as the mid-2012 blocking of You-Tube in Pakistan, or ongoing censorship of civic activism in China. Even in India, the past one year has seen a number of reprisals by the political class, against those individuals who have incurred their displeasure – using a draconian legal provision, Section 66 (a) of the Information Technology Act, 2000. Section 66(a) considers communication made via computer or other devices which may be “grossly offensive,” have a “menacing character,” or even cause “annoyance or inconvenience” to be a punishable offence. Unsurprisingly, this section has invited widespread criticism and a number of calls for its repeal.

However, it is important to also look beyond state censorship concerns, if we are to be effective in our efforts to protect social media spaces as sites for political activism. In specific, we need to recognise that corporates such as Google and Facebook, who dominate the online public sphere, are not immune to pressures from states. In many instances, they are known to have handed over user data to governments. Corporates also undertake arbitrary content censorship and trade user rights for market considerations. For instance, consider the case of Drones + – an i-Phone app that sends users a pop-up notice whenever a US army drone strike occurs, in any of the many undeclared wars the US is fighting. This app which was developed by a New-York based developer, has been repeatedly censored by Apple, without a satisfactory explanation – first Apple raised concerns with the functionality of the App. Afterwards when the developer reworked and resubmitted the app, Apple stated that many audiences would find the content objectionable, and therefore the app could not be approved.

In such a scenario, it is important that our stand against draconian regulations that promote state censorship should not metamorphose into a stand against regulation of social media, in-principle. Even freedom of expression requires appropriate media regulation.

3. Global regulatory framework for social media

There must be well-established norms on obtaining informed consent from users for data sharing, and clear guidelines on ownership of data generated through social media platforms. Arbitrary content censorship by corporates and/or by states must not be permitted.

Most importantly, it is crucial to ensure that the global Internet and other digital architectures, which are foundational to social media architectures, remain egalitarian.

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