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## "Impact of social media on democracy"

"Democracy is the government of the people, for the people and by the people."

- Abraham Lincoln

India, our motherland is said to be the largest democracy in the world. The word democracy is derived from the Greek word 'demo' which means 'people' and 'cracy' which means 'power'. In a nutshell, democracy can also be called as a rule of the people.

It is where the people, common men elect representatives by casting their valuable votes. Our country became a great democracy when the constitution of our country was officially enacted. Our constitution was prepared taking two years, eleven months and eighteen days! The makers of our greatest book had alluring thoughts in

their minds. We have tolerated the British rule for myriad of years. They looted our resources and left us a disastrous impact. Our leaders believed in repairing India from the diseases spread by the British and to transform the seventh largest country into a beautiful and powerful country. It was with that thought that democracy came into being. I cannot move on without mentioning about the preamble of our constitution. India became a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic. Our democracy too works on these principles. With the establishment of these fundamental values, we aim at India, being a value-rich corruption-free violence-free country. We recently celebrated the 76<sup>th</sup> years of Independence. Over these 76 years, democracy in my motherland has tremendously changed.



"Use social media to impact people, not impress people."

Our world has been revolutionised over the past few years with the emergence of technology. About 4.5 billion years ago, when earth was formed, there was no possibility of life. But about 3.7 billion years ago, microbes were formed and the first trace of human beings were found in Africa. From then on, several advancements has taken place in our society due to the savvy brains of homo sapiens. The one technology which I would say has influenced all aspects of our life is truly the emergence of media. It can be printed media - magazines, newspapers etc. It can be broadcasting media like television or radio. But in my opinion, the homo sapiens of 21<sup>st</sup> century cannot imagine a world without the usage.

of social media. Social media has become a vital and unavoidable part of our everyday existence. None of us can start our day without scrolling through abundant social media platforms like whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc. Can you imagine how seriously it has become an essential body part? A body which cannot be removed through surgery? Human beings spend 6h 58 minutes in social media platforms each day! I don't think you would be surprised if I said that 150 million new social media users emerged between April 2022 and April 2023. A ten year old has a facebook account these days. Don't baffle, a five year old has an Instagram account in our current era! My point is, social media has ~~be~~ a much bigger influence in managing my thoughts, actions, decisions and even tolerance!



..... A great question arises in front of our eyes. What has social media got to deal with democracy? Yes, it is a valid question. But for me to prove the significance of social media in democracy, I would have to point out the bases of democracy in 21<sup>st</sup> century.

..... The stalwarts of Indian Independence, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose etc. strongly believed that if a true democracy prevails in India with proper functioning and transparency, India would become tremendous advancements and would become a society of educated individuals who would uphold the true sense of patriotism and a society which hugs 'moral values' passionately. As a proud Indian, I am extremely sorrowful that the democracy in India

is not a complete success. The reasons why it is a partial failure would surely shock all the people as India was not supposed to be as it is today with the enactment of a precious Constitution. Indian democracy is being destroyed with the evil 'casteism'.

We must elect our representatives considering their potential to bring out positive changes in the society. But, it is horrifying to say that 'caste' is what determines whom an individual must elect. Politics drenched with the bad system of casteism still prevails in India.

You may think this is not true. But majority of people are influenced by casteism in democracy, which is a hindrance to the proper election of a worthy candidate who could uphold the true sense of democracy. Sadly, elected leaders are enjoying their fruitful position just due to the evil 'casteism'.



..... Communalism is the next thing to be pointed out. Communal violence, communal politics and communal democracy lingers. This prevalence would verify the true sense of democracy. As said regarding casteism, 'communalism' also is a block to true and worthy leaders rising to positions and providing the citizens with a considerable amount of justice and aid. A democracy with caste and community base is truly not what our ancestors dreamed of.

..... Adding to these issues, the next thing to be considered is 'regionalism'. What ethics will our society have if the right candidate from is not elected just because an unworthy candidate from your own place is also contesting? Regionalism is also greatly influencing the sense of

democracy. These factors are not only visible during the selection or so called election, but also after these elected candidates become a body of government and rule the people.

Apart from all of these detrimental truths, democracy has lost its value due to the prevailing social crime which is corruption. Corruption has been a part of our governance for ages. It is not something that began in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There are traces of mentions regarding corruption and corrupt politicians and officials back then in Kautilya's 'Arthashastra'. The renowned personality also has written about the actions and methods to be considered to eradicate corruption from the grass-root levels. Some of them includes transparency in funding and also about appointing a body to monitor the minute actions of the elected body. This evidently





proves the existence of corruption during the older periods... Coming to the definition of corruption - It is the usage of public properties or money for private gain. Corruption has become so natural that our society has now seen it as a natural phenomenon. What is the reason behind corrupt practices? The only answer to that question is man's greed! Ever since the emergence of humanity, man has longed for more and more. This greed and uncontrollable desire towards money made people in power, corrupt. Who doesn't like 'easy money'? Thus our society has been blessed with officials who long and moan for easy public money by providing illegal services or even simple providing of confidential information. A report recently spits the fact that...

India was ranked 75 out of 180 countries in the Corruption Perception List. Another major issue is that people do not cast votes! Only a few of them utilize their power efficiently. These jeopardies kill the Indian democracy.

Coming to the point,

'What is the impact of social media in democracy'? What if I say social media can fight against these evils that linger in democracy? Yes, it's true! Social media acts as a bridge between the people and the government. People get to know about the policies of the government through myriad of social media platforms. Thus the actions of government are updated at the right time and people understands what's happening in their society. This bridge called 'social media' has brought two major aspects - the people and government together.



✓ Not just people, government also gets to know about public opinions. A democracy or government is successful only when they get to formulate new policies or welfare activities according to the need of the people. The medium through which a government knows about people's issues or needs has now become social media. Thus, government or its branch of people who are aware of their responsibilities towards their people would consider people's opinion and then formulate or take necessary actions. Social media plays a pivotal role in it.

As I mentioned earlier, corruption is poison which is slowly but surely destroying Indian society. Social media plays a vital role in it too! Each and every minimal actions of government

were being updated to the common people via social media. To be clear, every minute actions are being watched and popularized. Thus the elected representatives in a sense in them that they are being watched and anything wrong would reach the masses as fast as a jet. This realisation would reduce the rate of corrupt practices to an extent. In a nutshell, social media or any other kind of media acts as a 'watchdog'. Officials might control their corrupt practices being afraid of the mass protest that can take place as a result of the information spread through social media platforms. I cannot say completely that this social media as a watchdog of the actions of officials, politicians or bureaucrats would completely wipe out corruption. But this would certainly have some kind of impact on the right functioning of democracy in one way or the other.



..... A strong opposition is also the pivotal part of a democracy. Opposing the ill policies or corrupt activities of the government is inevitable for ensuring sincerity. But in the absence of a strong opposition, social media can act as one. It can oppose the governing bodies regarding anything that is wrong and which will result in the degradation of quality life, people act or raise their voice and speak out through social media platforms. Thus it can act as a watchdog and opposition.

..... What is essential for the right casting of votes? Yes, a citizen above 18 years must have political awareness. Rather than casteism, communalism regionalism or other kinds of influences, what will lead a person to make up his

mind to vote the right person? Political awareness reach a person through the circle of people he/she is in and even through the editorials of his/her favourite newspapers. Democracy has attained its full sense if a person with right amount of political awareness cast votes correctly. Social media enhances this kind of awareness in an individual which will prompt him or her to understand the political situations of the society in a better way and participate in the democratic process.

Less participation of people in democracy is a major issue. The party with the lion's share of votes would win an election and take up respectable positions. But ~~can~~ is it right to use the word 'majority' if only 50% of the total voters can casted their votes? Social media creates awareness. It provides information and create a sense of right and power that a single



person's vote has it's own value. Your vote is much valuable as another one. Because our constitution sees everyone equal. This sense of awareness regarding the importance of casting votes, importance of political awareness etc. reach the masses through abundance of social media platforms. Such awareness has it's impact on the woman population as well. As Malala Yousafzai said, "If half of the population is held back, we will not have any progress in our country". Women's participation is pivotal for the right functioning of a democracy. They are also aware of their right, their necessity to be a part of democracy through this kind of democracy. Men and women must be empowered and has to be a part of it. Social media creates awareness regarding

this.

But social media has had impacts on democracy as well. False propagation of news is a vital issue. What if incorrect data regarding the government, judiciary or executive reaches the masses and people believe it without even thinking whether it is right or wrong? This can affect the right functioning of government.

According to Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation - "A democracy can only be called successful if the weakest has the same opportunities as the strongest". Rural awareness regarding all these has to be ensured as India has lion's share of its population in rural areas. Mobile phones or social media is propagating in a skyrocketing manner. Even the overall population is getting access to it. So, this can enhance the awareness of the simplest of man regarding the present day democracy.





Democracy is true and successful...  
If differences in opinions are spoken out,  
discussed and validated properly. Social  
media platforms has often become a...  
platform for such discussions. It...  
everything has it's two sides, it is our  
responsibility to understand the right...  
side of social media and understand, get...  
educated regarding democracy and...  
government from it. "Social media can  
open your eyes to a world of knowledge  
and also blind you." So use it wisely.

The reason behind democracy  
being descri... The reason behind media...  
being described as the fourth pillar of  
democracy is simple and evident. I remember  
a person opinioned that if he would want  
a democracy without newspapers or...

newspapers without democracy, he said he would choose the latter. Nowadays, social media is more powerful than newspapers. This gets us to the fact that media or social media in 21<sup>st</sup> century has a wider impact than we could think about. We must understand the existing issues in the three pillars of democracy - legislature, judiciary and executive, then try to erase the impacts of these issues through the fourth pillar of democracy - social media.

Let India be a true Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic through the right awareness and actions. In a nutshell, social media can help us in this.

"Use social media to impact people and not impress people"

- a wise man