

Role of Social Media in the Promotion of Hate Crimes in India

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ABSTRACT

India is a welfare state and it is clearly mentioned in the preamble of India that constitution of India believes in equality, fraternity, social justice and liberty of their citizen. Article 21 of the Indian constitution talks about the right to life and personal liberty but several incidents are being happened which threatens the life of the people. In India mob lynching is a classic example of hate crime and it has become a way of killing and way of getting control over the community by setting the examples of mob lynching. From the very past years, schedules caste people are being dominated by society and after independence the people of the Muslim community are also the victims of the hatred of the Hindutva ideology. This is being spread by the social media. This social media was introduced as an instrument which connects the people with each other but now in days it is being used as a weapon in promoting hate crimes, rumors, fake news and hate speeches.

This hate crimes and hate speeches are being spread by majority against minority so there is a need to increase the visibility of the difficulties which are being faced by the minority communities. It is directly related to the Hindutva ideology which triggers the mindset of the people against Muslims and Dalits. This research will enlighten the people about the ground reality of organized mob lynching, hate crimes, rumors, fake news and hate speeches against Muslims and Dalits. This study will suggest some valuable recommendations regarding safety provisions for the minority community. It will also contribute to the literature regarding Violation of Human Rights against minority communities.

Introduction

In current scenario, in Indian democracy, from the very past years, schedules caste people are being suppressed by society and after independence the people of the Muslim community are also the victims of the hatred of the Hindutva ideology.

According to Human Rights watch's Report about India, there 38 attacks were happened against Muslims and 10 people were killed by Hindu extremist groups, 2 people from Dalit

community were killed in caste clashes (Human Rights Watch, 2018). In 2019, 18 such attacks were occurred against Muslims and 8 people were killed by Hindu extremist groups and 9 people were killed in the clashes of Dalit and police in the agitation of SC&ST Act (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Tabrez is the most recent in the list of people who have been attacked allegedly for their religion. Ansari was attacked by the mob on June 17, 2019 in Jharkhand's Seraikela-Kharswan district while returning from his aunt's place. On 24th June 2019 he was tied to a pole and thrashed for over seven hours on charges of theft before being handed over to police. His family alleged that a mob thrashed him and forced him to say "Jai Shri Ram" and "Jai Hanuman" before handing him over to the police the next day. A severely wounded Ansari was taken to a district hospital, which cleared him for jail. Four days later, when his condition becomes deteriorated, he was rushed to another hospital, where the doctors declared him "brought dead". (News 18, 2019)

This type of incidents show that how some people have sense of hatred against a particular community and these types of incidents are endless, and most incidents do not get limelight because it is a common phenomenon for the village people so they don't make objection and don't register them.

Social media is a tool of communication but it is being used to organize such hate crimes. In current era, social media is used as an instrument in spreading fake news, rumors, communal hatred, taking revenge etc. because it is easily affordable. Anybody can make fake account on social media and easily spread the news or rumors and in return tracing people is quite hard in fact without help of the IT expert nobody can trace the person.

In current era, social media is being used to promote such hate crimes and communal hatred against majority in minority groups (i.e. Muslims) through different platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Whatsapp, YouTube, Instagram, Telegram, Snap chat etc. through spreading fake news and unfortunately it is being practiced. Thus there is a need to impose restrictions/limitations on the social media to eradicate such incidents of hate crimes.

Social Media- An Instrument of Change

In practical life, there is a need to unearth the reality of virtual life (i.e. social life). In current era, there is a plenty of options on our social media such as Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram, Snap chat, Twitter, YouTube etc. to socialize ourselves. The main feature of social media is engagement of people where every age group person has become habitual of this.

Social media is a magnificent instrument for connecting people. It can be used for various purposes and the magnificent feature. Anyone can access social media as per the need. In

current technical world, it is being used as an updating instrument because with the help of social media it is affordable to get the news from corner of the world. It is also used as an instrument of gathering information regarding any issue through using different applications like Google.

In spite of all positive factors and characteristics, social media as an instrument of change is easy to explain because if we will analyze our country then we will find a huge gap between bourgeois and proletariat class but due to easy access of social media everyone upgrade him and try to eliminate socio-biased stratification.

As we have discussed the magnificent features of this instrument but simultaneously we have to be aware of negative aspects of this instrument. Without any doubt social media is good that's why everyone uses it but due to it's over goodness, people are becoming habitual, addicted and it also affecting their health. If we only stress on youth so it reduced the learning and research capabilities, nobody wants to search and check the credibility of the information. It is very easy to spread fake news, rumors. Apart from this, it has another negative aspect which is beyond its goodness. After observing several incidents of caste clashes, communal violence, mob lynchings and murders with the connection of social media so we are constrained to think about it boundaries. We cannot compromise our national unity & integrity only for such features because it breaks the nation into religion and religion into caste. Now recent, many incidents of communal violence & cast clashes were happened and it was found that social media had played significant role in these incidents. It helped in spreading fake news and made wrong perception towards victims so the masses were misguided and then incident took place. It is being used in organized crime, promoting political agenda, making wrong image of selected people, fake news against majority in minority groups etc.

Social Media- Destruction of Opinion

1. Hating Tool

We have discussed above about social media and its implications. Now there is need to throw some light on hate crime. Hate Crime can be referring to an act as "*any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by a hostility or prejudice*".

As we can share knowledge, news, views, ideology, ideas as like that we can also share fake news, rumors, hate speeches which can easily triggers the mindset of people and

provoke them to take steps towards protection of his community interest. In India, social media is also used as a hating tool which spread hatred against Muslims (on the grounds of – Muslims eat cows meat, Muslims are increasing their population and want to rule over India again, they are spread love jihad with the ambition of converting Hindu women into Muslims) and Dalits are also being targeted (for - Dalits are not still deprived, reservation was made only for 10 years but still they are availing its benefits, they do not need any reservation and Dalits are grabbing their seats).

These fake news's are the reasons of the communal violence and caste clashes because earlier people were not socially active on these issues but now everyone can see the pictures and videos which are spread with a hate content. There is no credibility of this news's that these are true news or fake news.

It is very shocking that NCRB does not record the data of communal riots, caste riots and murders motivated by communalism & casteism. So in absence of official data, we are compelled to rely on non-state sources like news media as a primary source of data on contemporary mob violence & lynchings. The most widely received data which is provided by the independent media portal India spend. in has reported that since 2012, there are 308 persons have been attacked in 94 incidents in which 8 were cow related violence till Sep 3, 2018. Another portal haltthehate.com is operated by Amnesty International and it documents 10 “hate crimes” from English and Hindi media sources. It has been recording acts of violence directed against religious and caste minority groups since September 2015. This shows a total of 603 incidents till September 3, 2018.

This huge number of cases demonstrate that how the issue of communal & caste violence are serious and need to be stopped.

2. Elite's Puppet

Usually, governments employ market failure and equity considerations as the most significant motive for familiarizing regulatory regimes. According to Mc Chesney,

“Regulatory resolutions have a direct effect on pricing, competition, inclusion or exclusion of market actors, and monopolistic strategies of the media firms”.¹

Thus, there is a propensity among watchdogs to apply bureaucratic powers to control media organizations by enacting complicated regulations that are used to tame unruly and adversary communication outlets. Other scholars (Bernstein, 1955; Kemal, 2002; McChesney, 2008;

Napoli, 2003; Olson, 1982; Stigler, 1971) are of the view that the regulatory bodies begin their work devotedly to reform media firms but as the time passes, they become inefficient by indulging in bureaucratic routines and begin to safety measure interests of political and economic elite who use different tactics to cajole the controllers.

The Indian media has twisted into a corporate venture whose role is to manufacture and produce news and to sell the news to viewers who are buying this “manufactured” news. The forward-facing pages of many newspapers in our country have started withbear a resemblance to the front pages of web portals and are full of advertisements and are also paid news! Newspapers like Times of India, Hindustan Times have 4-5 pages of paid advertisements without any current factual news.

The Indian society is separated amongst communal and caste based and media have wedged this divide even deeper and has added fuelled to fire. When these news channels run flashy fallacious headlines for Target Rating Point (TRP), they act as a hazardous catalyst to the already volatile society using the curtain of ‘*Sootron se patachalalhai*’ (source revealed).

Another concern of this is the indoctrination of the ill-informed audiences and the ill opinion that is formed amongst the viewers. Thus, it is seen that the current government has set a new benchmark in using social media to drive their agenda.

Subir Ghosh, co-author of *Sue The Messenger*, a book which explore about how corporate ownership and legal harassment by powerful business houses are distorting reports and weakening democracy, states:

"If writing and report are shackled, it is democracy which gets undermined. It is the people who lose their unfettered right to know".ⁱⁱ

The second aspect of this problem is the distribution of a fake machine and how the current government has focused on perception management. Doctored videos, articles are being posted online and are being run on news channels to manipulate the opinion of the masses as seen in the example of Zee News where the channel ran doctored and manufactured biased videos.

As per the report submitted by UK-based technology research firm Comparitech, socio-technical companies like Google, Facebook, Twitter, Microsoft, and open encyclopedia Wikimedia, have received the most content elimination requests from India.ⁱⁱⁱ They also mentioned in their report that India is followed by Russia and Turkey in content deletion

requests, which systematized data from the transparency reports of top internet companies till date. The governments of India and Russia each accounted for almost 20% of the overall number of removal requests, as per their report. The total number of requests sent worldwide to internet firms stood at 390,764 so far.^{iv}

Online websites have popped up which have huge traffic focusing on fake news and playing a role of monopolized media by current government. The media channels, in this capitalist society are essential to run throughout the day and when there is no news as such, they are often seemed to run fake news which is not based on any facts and is usually been doctored by the media houses, but what is even more dangerous is that these media houses seem to run these doctored videos at prime time and thus distressing and deploying the opinion of the majority.

Section 123, (3) of Representation of Peoples Act 1951 talks about No candidate can deliver hate speeches during elections, ask for votes on the behalf of religion, caste, creed, race etc. but in this general elections of Parliament were openly asking votes on religion and caste. On April 9, 2019 at Meerut rally, current Chief Minister of U.P. openly said “who believes in Bajrangbali they vote to BJP but who believes in Ali they vote to other parties”. This kind of speeches in elections improves the gulf of religious hatred and these kinds of speeches are spread on social media.

On the other hand, the other news reporters and people who speaks against government and their delegates are openly brutally abused & trolled on social media and not only this, they are threatened for their lives. They are badly insulted and pressurized by the government to resign from their post. Their careers are spoiled and they are boycotted by rest of the society.

3. As Organized Crime Weapon

Organized crime can be called specified as spreading hate under a well-thought-out plot. The central organized crime action is the supply of illegal goods and services to innumerable customers. It is also intensely involved in legitimate business and in labour unions. It employs illegitimate methods like monopolization, terrorism, extortion and tax-evasion to drive out or governor lawful ownership and leadership, and to excerpt illegal profits from the public.

Now days, social media is used as an instrument of weapon for escalating organized crimes in India. An intensifying number of attacks on immigrants and other minorities have raised new

concerns about the connection between inflammatory speech online and violent acts, as well as the role of corporations and the state in policing speech. Trends in hate crimes around the world echo vicissitudes in the political climate, and that social media can magnify dissonance. At their most extreme, rumors and invective dispersed online have contributed to violence ranging from lynchings to ethnic cleansing.

According to *Zachary Laub*,

In India, lynch mobs and other types of communal violence, in many cases originating with rumors on Whatsapp groups, have been on the rise since the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power in 2014.^v

The same technology that permits social media to electrify democracy activists can be used by hate groups seeking to organize and recruit. It also sanctions fringe sites, including peddlers of conspiracies, to reach audiences far wider than their core readership. Online platforms' business models hinge on maximizing reading or viewing times.

According to World Bank Report, 2016 and The Next Web Report, 2017, India, with around 30% internet penetration, already has more than 241 million users of Facebook alone. Further, when talking about social media, we cannot ignore the penetration of WhatsApp, which has reached more than 200 million users in India as per the report submitted by *Mashable* (a digital media website) in 2017, which means that 200 million users in India are exchanging messages on a daily basis in real time. Thus, as one of the most widespread channels of communications today, social media plays a momentous role in both fighting hate speech and magnifying it. Since Facebook and similar podiums make their money by allowing advertisers to target viewers with extreme precision, it is in their benefits to let people find the communities where they will spend the most time.

Users' experiences online are mediated by algorithms intended to capitalize on their engagement, which often carelessly promote extreme content. Some web watchdog groups say, YouTube's auto play function, in which the player, at the end of one video, tees up a related one, can be particularly malicious.^{vi} The algorithm drives people to videos that promote conspiracy theories or are otherwise "divisive, misleading or false," according to a Wall Street Journal investigative report. Sociologist *Zeynep Tufekci* writes

"YouTube may be one of the most powerful radicalizing instruments of the 21st century."^{vii}

YouTube said in June 2019 that changes to its reference algorithm made in January had halved views of videos believed “borderline content” for scattering misinformation. At that time, the company also publicized that it would remove neo-Nazi and white supremacist videos from its site.^{viii} Yet the platform faced disparagement that its efforts to curb hate speech does not go far enough. For instance, critics note that rather than eliminating videos that provoked homophobic harassment of a journalist, YouTube instead cut off the antisocial user from sharing in promoting revenue.

In 2013, an article in the Hindustan Times cited Professor Badri Narayan from the GB Pant Social Science Institute in Allahabad as saying,

“From word of mouth, communal polarization is now moving online. This is a dangerous trend since the internet is very potent.”^{ix}

To truly avoid incidents of hate speech online, there is a sorely necessity for a massive campaign that sensitizes people towards media consumption and helps them differentiate between free speech and hate speech. It is the responsibility of every individual in the society who uses the internet, to produce or ingest content as conscientious citizens and not just as blindfolded clients.

Suggestions

In today’s context, Social media is major significant tool which raises the social issues and the unheard voice of people to masses. It talks about the issues which are separated from bureaucratization & institutionalization. Through social media we try to create an informal platform to know and understand the problems & situations of people.

When we look towards the responsibility we move towards the solutions. While using the social media we have to know our responsibilities so the responsibilities can be classified into three responsibilities holders.

- 1. Responsibility of Administrators of social media-** The administrators should realize their responsibilities and should make a checking authority to check the credibility and validity of most spreading messages which are spreading hatred against any particular religion and community, those messages should be blocked or stopped. And they should promote the messages which are spreading communal harmony and prosperity.

- 2. Responsibilities of an Individual-** An individual should play a role of change agent rather than beneficiary. If an individual receives a message which does not have any valid credible source so the individual should dump the message and do not spread the message because everyone can take their responsibility not for others. He should not create a message which threatens the communal harmony even he should promote and develop the messages that uplift the integration of people.
- 3. Responsibilities of Government** –Government should play a role as unbiased and transparent structure. Government's IT cell should search the messages which are spreading hatred, fake news & rumors and should stop them immediately and should find out the persons who are spreading fake news and hatred so that they can be punished. Government should make such laws to prevent communal harmony and to stop communal hatred and make sure these laws should be properly amended not only for the papers.

Yes there can be such other solutions but if we emphasis on these measures then can be a drastic change can be brought and the situation can be better and improved.

Solutions cannot be properly given because we are living at the time where we cannot live without social media. As 'diamond is required to cut the diamond' as like that we have to use social media to vanish the fake news and rumors because the ample number of people use it so we have to use it to eliminate its rumors.

To eliminate this problem,first of all the right news should be spread at that level where the fake news exist because then only people can break their myths. Secondly, the seminar or workshop should be conducted at the different places like trade unions, universities & colleges, business associations other place where the maximum people can be aware that how the people can check the credibility of the news and what are the reliable source to get information. Third is, social media administrator's should make a checking authority to check the credibility and validity of most spreading messages. Forth, broadcast messages should be checked by the social media administrators.

Conclusion

Beyond doubt, a fair competition in the broadcast market in India would lead to proficiency, inventive content formats, and an emphasis on consumer needs. Besides, economic considerations, competition would enhance multiplicity, localism, and consumer participation. However, competition in a antagonistic environment does not guarantee

diversity and localism and monitoring regimes should actively interfere in the media market and should frame policies ensuring equal and fair competition for all actors in the market. For example, Schwartzman analyzed Viacom-CBS merger and determined that a new wave of consolidation would have serious consequences for the American media market in the new millennium.^x

Similarly, political economists have severely criticized merger mania and attentiveness in the media market as monopoly over communication resources provides unrestrained power to few elite companies to manipulate culture, politics, and economy. Thus, Indian Media regulatory body needs to revisit its regulatory policy by active elimination of cross-media ownership and alliance of its resources in a few hands. Diversity of content, sources, and organizations is important for the smooth functioning of a healthy media sphere in India, which would successively inspire pluralism, deliberative democracy, and freedom of expression in the country.

We live in a Democratic country where media plays an imperative role in influencing the public narrative and affecting the public opinion about policies, the government, or any law in the country. A journalist's task is to create awareness among the citizens about real world scenario by presenting facts differentiated from a particular perspective so that they can form their opinions. Media also plays a role of Mediator in between political and social discourse of the country as it provides a platform for conversation among the people about things that are of prime importance to the people of our nation. Thus, in India, the fourth estate of our democracy has miserably failed to perform its function and it is imperative to examine how the media has slowly withered away from doing its job during the current government's regime.

In the past few years, the Indian Media has become dualistic in nature where journalism is limited to pro-government stances and some criticizing the policies of the government. Thus, there has been a flood of networks and newspapers but a deficiency of facts where media has printed and telecasted unconfirmed and prejudiced news. This has led to popcorn entertainment for people where media is seen to be paid news without the objective of enlightening the public with factual news. The public belief towards journalism has also suffered because of this, as people have stopped watching or reading the news. Thus, it is high time for the media to start refining the quality of news and show impartial news and give people a chance to form their own opinion.

For political leaders, who wish to bring about change and people who want their voice to be heard, social media seem a democratizing space that eradicates old elites and gatekeepers, albeit with followers and elves springing up in their place.

The future of democracies will lie in the way, leaders deal with monopolized social media challenge whether they use the space opened up by social media just to win fanatical followers or to cheer debate and dialogue.

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