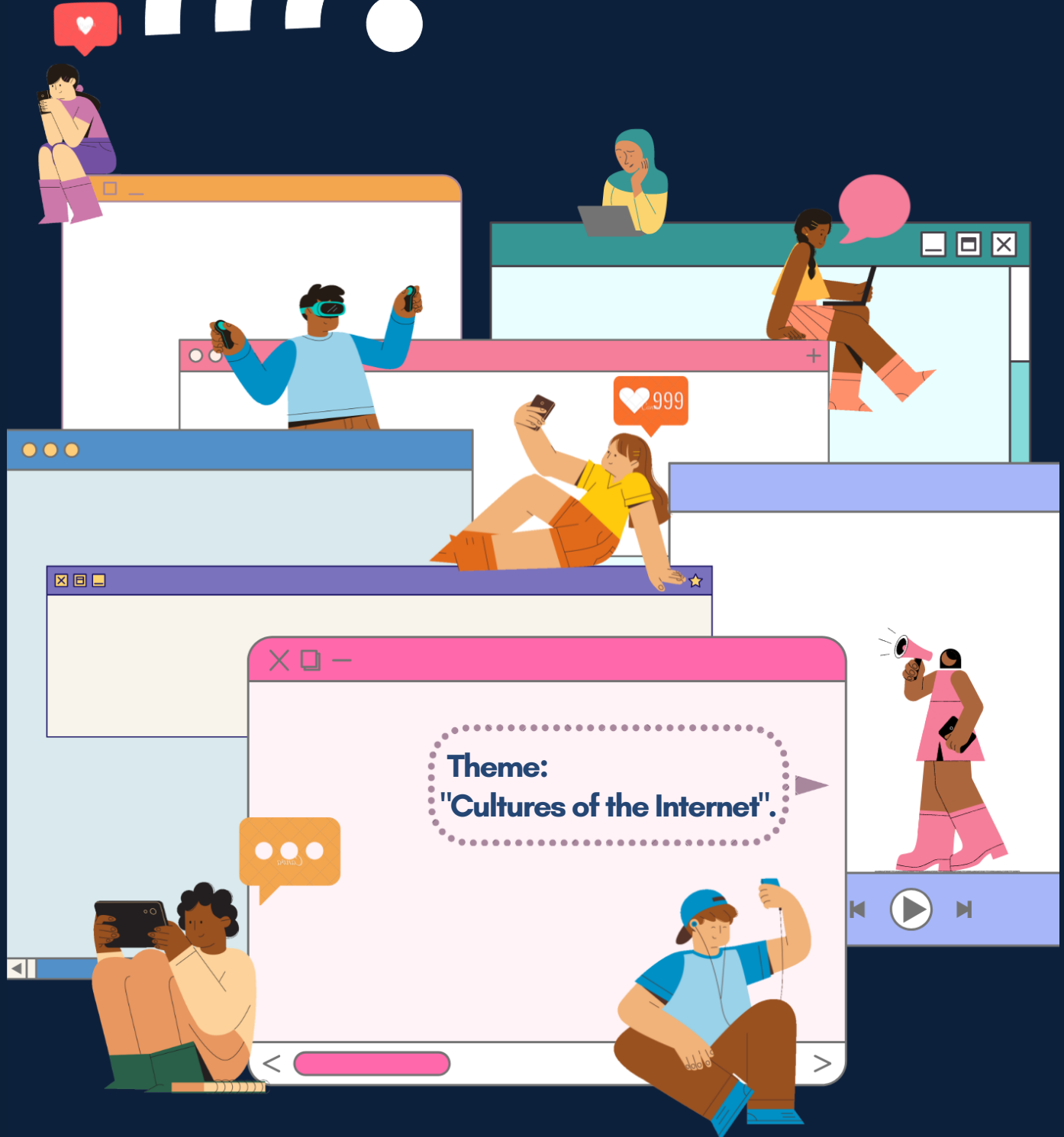




# MERAKI

## ANNUAL MAGAZINE

### 2021-22



# EDITORIAL NOTE



It was towards the end of last year when the editorial team of Meraki started brainstorming about possible themes for this year's edition. After much back and forth trying to come up with a theme that would be relevant and broad enough to engage our peers, we arrived upon our current theme - **Cultures of the Internet**.

Social media has rapidly become an integral part of today's society; becoming a platform for distinct and patterned interactions along with socializing. Thus, during our discussions, we realized that from influencers to fans to meme page admins, pop culture fanatics, and community organizers, the digital space is marked by distinct user patterns; each worthy of being studied and explored.

Although seeming relatable in nature, it was a tedious task for us to decide the theme's scope, limits and boundaries. Discussions around the narrative direction of the theme were plenty. While trying to strike a balance between the academic core and popular media concepts, we formulated 4 different drafts of the concept note. In each one, we tried to approach the theme from different angles and directions. After many disagreements and debates, we settled on the final version of the draft, one that would succinctly capture all of our ideas.

We hoped to implore our contributors to engage and study the idea of the internet as a multitudinous phenomena. Therefore, our concept note included several ideas such as the coexistence of identity, anonymity and self-expression on the internet, the internet as an ideological state apparatus, the language of humor in online spaces, growing concerns regarding censorship and surveillance and its disproportionate impact on vulnerable communities and much more.

After finalizing the concept note, it was time for us to recruit new members into the team. We grew from a small team and now we are 15 members strong. This year, we wanted to focus more on the design aspect so that we could make this year's edition of Meraki a visually pleasing experience for our readers. Hence, we were joined by some wonderfully talented designers who have worked on making our vision come to life.



While we did anticipate that a huge amount of work would be required to prepare and publish this magazine, we couldn't anticipate the sudden change to our schedules and routines brought about by the reopening of college. This meant a transition from working from home and having virtual meetings to working as a team in the physical mode. Trying to find time for physical meetings while weaving through everyone's busy schedules was a new and challenging task for us.

When it came to the actual look of the magazine, the design team prioritized illustrations for the front and back cover with the help of Canva and its colorful templates and graphics. While working on the cover page, the team realized that we could make the magazine look more vibrant by creating section dividers and arranging the write ups in symmetrical and relevant layouts. All of this had to be done in a very short span of time, due to which the team had to sometimes work well into the night. But the fact that you are able to read these words means we have been successful.

This magazine is indeed a true expression of Meraki, an exercise carried out with love, creativity, and most importantly our souls. This process of creation and collaboration has meant that when you read through this magazine you are left with small parts of all of us. In the end, we would like to thank Dr. Devika Mittal and Dr. Sabiha Mazid for giving us their helpful advice and guiding us at every step of the way.

**We hope you enjoy going through the magazine, as much as we enjoyed making it!**

# CONTENTS

## 1. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU!

HIMANGI MISHRA 1

## 2. SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE CHAMBER OF ECHOES

VRINDA GUPTA 4

## 3. INTERNET CULTURE: TRANSITIONS AND PROBLEMS

NIYAN SHYJO 7

## 4. GENDER AND REPRESENTATION : A DOUBLE EDGED SWORD

KETAKI TYAGI 9

## 5. TROLLS GALORE

KAAVYA JACOB 13

## 6. INTERNET AS A SHEPHERD OF OPINIONS

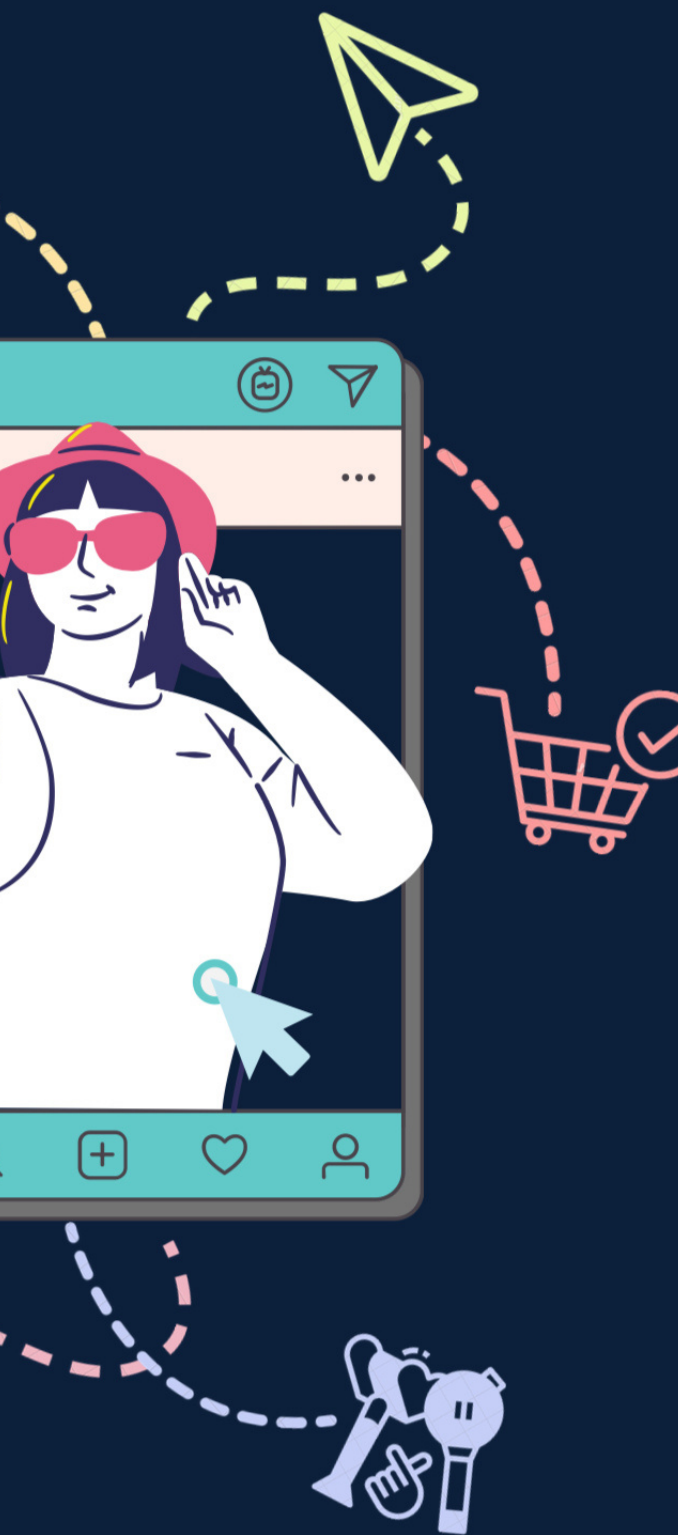
SOUMYAA SOMATRA 19

## 7. ESCAPADES WITH THE LITTLE BLUE BIRD

AKSHITA PAREEK 21

## 8. INTERNET HUMOUR

ISHITA DHAWAN 25



|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>9. SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE INFLUENCER CULTURE</b>                            |    |
| VISHNUPRIYA GAUR   | 27 |
| <b>10. THE SOCIAL DILEMMA: A REVIEW</b>                                      |    |
| ADITI KRISHNAMURTHY  | 30 |
| <b>11. CULTURE: THAT FADED OUT MINE</b>                                      |    |
| AKSHINA GHOSH  | 33 |
| <b>12. सुविधा का दूसरा नाम इंटरनेट</b>                                       |    |
| पायल शर्मा   | 34 |
| <b>13. YOUTUBE: GATEWAY TO AN EMANCIPATORY CULTURE</b>                       |    |
| SAYNA MISHRA   | 36 |
| <b>14. THE WILD, WONDERFUL AND WARPED WORLD OF ONLINE GAMING COMMUNITIES</b> |    |
| ANEET BINDRA   | 39 |
| <b>15. THE BTS FAN COMMUNITY</b>   |    |
| SUMEDHA VASHISTA   | 42 |
| <b>16. SOCIAL MEDIA AND HYPERREALITY: WHAT IS EVEN REAL?</b>                 |    |
| ANNAPURNA  | 46 |



# BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU!

*By Himangi Mishra*

In the last two years, everything has gone online; our food, groceries, clothes, education, medical appointments, and whatnot, so have the welfare policies of our government. Online Contact Tracing and Internet-facilitated Vaccination Programs had become the global standard but what was not standard is an extensive privacy breach. Remember, when we with our hearts full of sorrows and minds bulked with the bad memories of COVID-19 waves rushed to download Aarogya Setu app to check our health status and set our vaccination dates as soon as possible; we risked our privacy. Away from the general belief, privacy is not only a state of maintaining secrecy but also being left alone, unwatched, and unbothered. Though it is considered that contact tracing and rapid vaccination drive were the need of the hour, this end is not enough to justify the invasive nature of the means.

Unlike many such other Apps, Aarogya Setu used both the phone's Bluetooth and the Global Positioning System (GPS) to trace the movements and the contacts of the individual in focus which makes it excessively intrusive and questionable. This allows the app to collect and store multiple data points for sensitive information in comparison to other such apps which collect one data point and replace it with the scrubbed device identifier later. Moreover, who is accountable for information collected from these multiple points? No one knows. In accordance with the reply given in this regard by the three central organizations which are involved with the app, namely, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), the National E-Governance Division (NeGD), and the National Information Centre (NIC) to the Central Information Commission stand evasive.

In this situation, if someone misuses our information then who should be blamed? In the absence of any prudent data protection law, this question becomes even more serious. With the creation of the Aarogya Setu app, the state breaches most of the restrictions imposed on it to accommodate individuals' privacy. It highly personalizes the information by demanding name, age, sex, movement, and medical test details. In the absence of any Data Protection Law, whatever little the state could have done, is, it could have presented the proposal of creating any such app to the parliament but it failed to do so. Or it could have just made its use consensual.

Initially, the app came into being under the direction of the government issued under section 10 of the Disaster Management Act. In such a case, non-compliance attracts a prison term of 1-2 years. When this compulsory mandate was lifted by the government, it issued Draft Standard Operating Procedure for E-commerce to various companies and made them make the use of the Aarogya Setu app compulsory for their employees. The use for foreign and domestic travellers was also mandated, soon after. Ultimately, it acted as a compulsion for all to download vaccination certificates.

*Source: creapills.com*

As per the judgment given by the Supreme Court of India in the case of *Gobind v. State of Madhya Pradesh* (1975) right to privacy stands as the fundamental right and stands implicit in Article 21 of the Indian Constitution which primarily stands for the right to life and personal liberty. The judgement of the Supreme Court of India in the case of Justice K.S. Puttaswamy and Ors. V. Union of India and Ors. (2017) further improved the scope of privacy under Indian jurisprudence. It recognized Right to Privacy will not lose its status amongst the Golden Trinity of Article 14 (Right to Equality), Article 19 (Right to Freedom), and Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty). In this ruling Justice D.Y. Chandrachud recognizes privacy as a prerequisite state for the fulfilment of the individual's dignity. He enunciates that if any law infringes this state, then it should be just, fair, reasonable, and in accordance with the fundamental rights of the Constitution of India. Any such law should entail these basic requirements, legality which postulates the existence of law; need, defined in terms of a legitimate state aim; proportionality, ensuring a rational nexus between the objects and the means adopted to achieve them. Moreover, the judgment also differentiates the concept of anonymity from privacy. Where privacy concerns information, anonymity concerns personalized information. But all these legal provisions standstill as we witness the case of *Aarogya Setu*. It delivers the situation alarming. With this, the need for a comprehensive Personal Data Protection Act has increased.

Presently, the surveillance nature of the Indian State is governed mainly by two legislations - the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and Information Technology Act, 2000 which concern the interception of telephones and data respectively along with the IT (Procedure and Safeguards for Interception, monitoring, and Decryption of Information) Rules, 2009. Section 5 of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 allows the central government and state government to issue orders of surveillance for (1) any "public emergency" or in the interest of "public safety" and (b) the interests of sovereignty and integrity of the country; State security; in order to maintain friendly relations with foreign states; to maintain public order; for preventing incitement to the commission of an offence. The order can only be issued by the Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs. However, as per the Supreme Court Judgement in the landmark case of *People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) v. Union of India* (1997) Section 5(2) of the Act will cease to have effect at the end of the period of two months from the date of issue.

Similarly, section 69 of the Information Technology Act, 2000 allows the Central Government and the State Governments to issue directions for the monitoring, interception, or decryption of any information transmitted, received, or stored through a computer resource. Such interception can be conducted to protect the sovereignty or integrity of India; Defense of India; Security of the State; Friendly relations with foreign States; Public order; Prevent incitement to the commission of any cognizable offence relating to the above; and for the investigation of any offence. The Secretary of Home affairs can solely issue orders of surveillance under this act.



Source: [smartydns.com](http://smartydns.com)

The use of surveillance software to spy on individuals is a criminal offence under section 66B of the act. Furthermore, under section 43 of the IT Act, any person without the permission of the owner of a computer, accesses or secures access to the computer system in order to download, copy, or extract any data from, introduces, or causes to be introduced any computer contaminant or computer virus into, damages, disrupts, or denies access to such computer system or charges services availed of by one person to another person can be made liable to pay compensation to the extent of Rs. 1, 00, 00,000/-. Indeed, these provisions are significant but they are inadequate.

With time, the usage of data has increased in various ways and for various purposes. The surveillance under CCTV cameras and drones remains absolutely outside the breadth of these laws. Verily, we need a law that lays high emphasis on consent and data principles ensured by the well-laid-out procedure of checks and balances. It should envisage that transparency and procedure of collecting, processing, disclosing, and making data available to the desired party should be informed to the individual in focus. Along with the authorized commission for overseeing the procedure of the surveillance in conduct, a commission for redressal of illegal infringement should be established as well. In a nutshell, if you are using my data then it should be used on consensually negotiated terms which should be upheld.



# SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE CHAMBER OF ECHOES

By Vrinda Gupta

I grew up hearing, “*Sahitya samaaj ka darpan hota hai,*” which essentially means that literature is the mirror of society. It is a reflection of the times that we live in, the beliefs that we hold, and the values that we endorse. In today’s time, we may expand that quote to *Social Media is a reflection of society, or the times that we live in.*

The way in which social media platforms function is very interesting. The feed algorithm and the interaction paradigms are designed such that if you engage with a particular kind of content, it shows you more content of a similar kind. Furthermore, the content that we do not engage with or avoid consuming, does not show up on our feeds. The result being: it creates echo chambers around us, which are further fueled by people joining groups formed around a shared narrative. We continuously consume more and more content that aligns with our personal biases and believe them to be true. We are gradually programmed to believe everything we consume and stop using our own rationale and asking questions. It leads to polarization of the masses, which is extremely evident in our current times.



Illustration by Hadia Rehman

This is not to say that only people with a particular kind of political affiliation are plagued by this problem; I have suffered at the hands of this algorithm myself. My journey began with asking questions, questioning everything I was conditioned to believe in growing up. Reflecting on my own biases, learning to discover the blind spots in my ideas and actively unlearning by way of questioning. I started following people on social media handles who offered an alternate perspective or expressed views which were dissimilar to the ones I had heard growing up. However, gradually I started believing everything that I was reading online. My internal narrative shifted from, "*Mummy Papa bade hain...agar kuch keh rahe hain toh sahi hi hoga*" (Mom and Dad are elders, if they are saying something it must be right), to "*Yeh insaan itna woke hai kuch keh raha hai toh sahi hi hoga*" (This guy is so woke, if he's saying something it must be right).

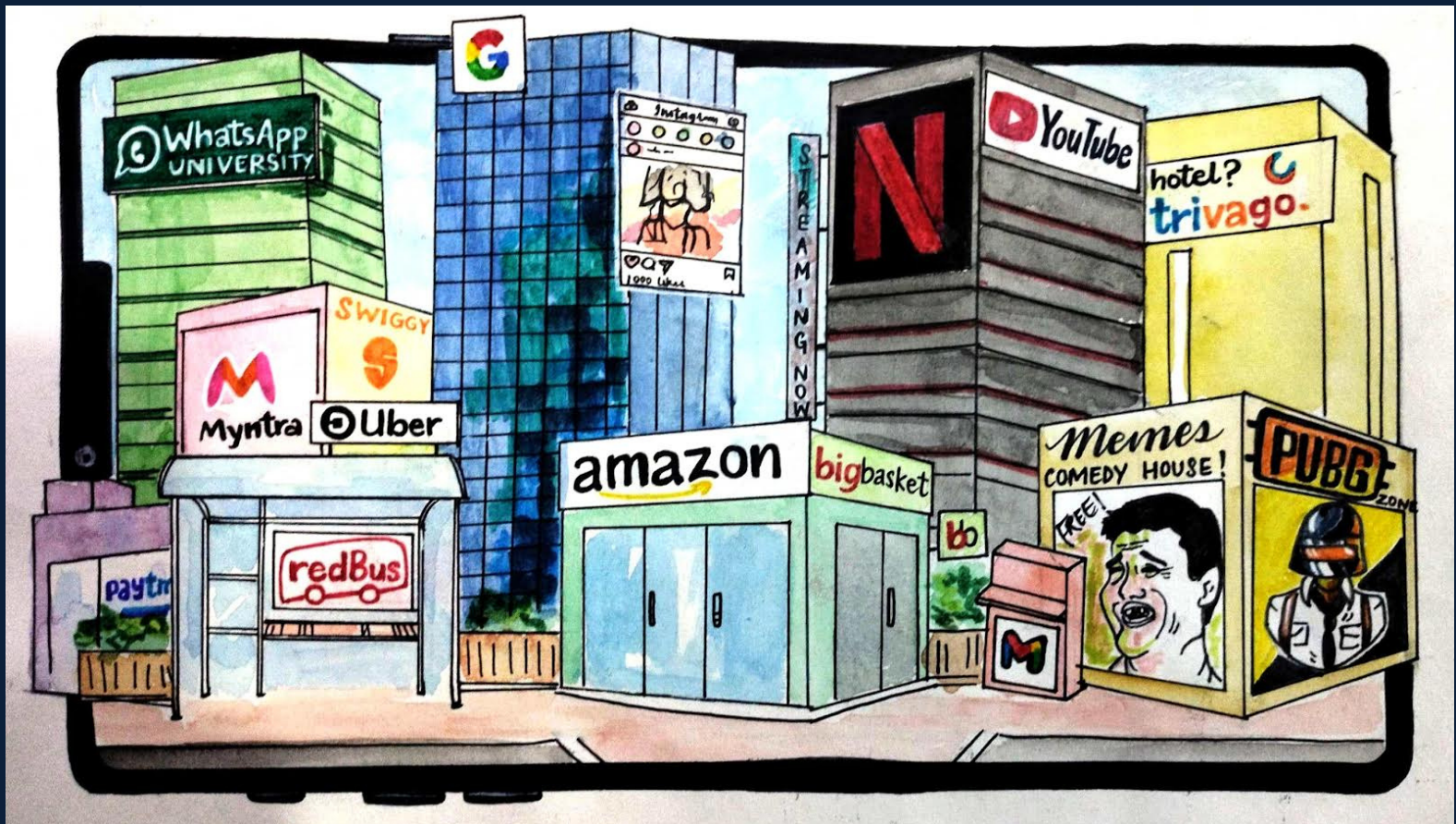
Two different situations, with the same problem: believing the messages around us without asking ourselves important questions like *Where is this idea stemming from? Is it based on facts? Who benefits from this belief?* It is important to understand that no person is free from bias. Even research papers aren't entirely objective- they are significantly influenced by the bias of the researcher or the corporations funding the research which often have self-serving objectives- let alone the content floating around on social media. Therefore, it is extremely important that we all ask questions, continuously, to ourselves and to those around us.

I have learned over time that refusing to engage with people who believe in narratives that are different or at times maybe even in stark opposition to our beliefs or values is not the way out of this problem, because how will you break through people's echo chambers without talking to them?

Maybe the real art here is once again to ask questions, that force them to reflect and question their beliefs instead of providing counters which make them defensive and hold onto their beliefs even more tightly. I would like to take the liberty to quote the movie Inception here and say, "For an idea to really stick, it has to seem self-generated."

The way I see it, information is power. Whosoever controls the dissemination of information, controls the world. But the ray of light lies in the fact that we live in a time where information is easily accessible. With a little effort- by actively educating ourselves, by reading from multiple and relatively more credible sources, by actively engaging in conversations with actual stakeholders of the situation, by making space for the lived realities of people- we can all reclaim our power.





*Illustration by Hadia Rehman*



# Internet Culture: Instagram Transitions and Problems

*By Niyam Shyjo*

Internet culture is based on the many manifestations of the use of computer networks for communication, entertainment, business, and recreation. The internet has its own pros and cons. From providing us with assistance and knowledge to providing a platform to harass others. The list goes on and on. Sometimes the disadvantages overshadow the advantages. We live in a world where everything revolves around technology, more particularly, the internet. A world in which children are more aware about advanced technologies than adults. A world where cyberbullying has become the new normal. A world where people are judged on the basis of their social media personality rather than their real personality.

Sometimes I wonder if we are so engrossed in this that we have forgotten to differentiate between the real and reel world. The internet has become so toxic that it compels people to go on a social media detox to cleanse their mind. Constant unsolicited comments force people to question everything about their life. From being unhappy about others' success to being happy about others' downfall, we are all stuck in this never-ending loop. We feel the pressure to always look perfect. We feel the continuous urge to use numerous filters to elicit compliments from people that we have never met before.

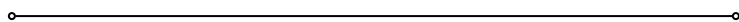
People are forced to share their views on the internet, but once they share their views they are trolled for no particular reason. The internet world is becoming more and more insensitive. Making jokes out of war, pandemic, and death - claiming that these jokes are a coping mechanism. Humanity is long gone. These trends of "dark humor" are dangerous. It is not a 'coping mechanism' for people who are living with fear, who lost their loved ones, who are forced to abandon their hometown. It is easy to sit behind a screen and make jokes, judge, and bully others, but it actually takes a lot of nerve to put yourself out there and be at the receiving end of all this hate.

Have we all not seen the spam comments on many artists' content? Have you all wondered why there are so many of the same kind of comments under an artist's video? There may be two reasons, first, to get into the trending list, in other words chart manipulation and second, to shadow ban the video. Shadow ban is usually done by fans of huge fandoms to prevent other artists from overpowering their idols. We have all witnessed the craze behind these huge artists, which makes people forget that these artists are also humans.

From pressuring influencers to dress a particular way, to schooling them to behave a particular way; controlling their lives has become a new trend. Critiquing their fashion sense to bullying others to follow their fashion. Are you not aware of the newest fashion trends? Then you will be scrutinized or your class will be questioned.

This makes me wonder about the degree of censorship and surveillance on the internet. Is what we have now adequate or should some degree of censorship be imposed? I want to pose a question to the censor board. How do you choose what to censor and what not to? I have seen a lot of people complain about the censor board blatantly censoring content that is not offensive at all and allowing screening of movies or content that is outright outrageous. It is also important to consider freedom of speech. In India, courts in numerous judgements have stressed that constant imposition of censorship in films has a detrimental impact on artistic freedom and creativity. The protection of artistic freedom is an essential part of democracy. Preventing people from sharing their views can promote fear among the citizens, a symbol of dictatorship. A proper balance is to be maintained between freedom of speech and expression and social interests. Defying this balance can lead to a collapse in peace amongst citizens and disrupt society.

We cannot put our faith in a third person to prevent people from putting out abhorrent content. We should understand the effort that it takes to create content that these influencers make. We should understand the pain of victims of war and pandemic. We should understand that everyone has different interests. We should understand that not everyone is a fashion icon. There should always be room for compassion, creativity and humanity. It should be self learned. The thin line between right and wrong is so blurred that it is difficult to control people on what to put out on the internet. Be conscious of what you put out on the internet because it can make or break your life.

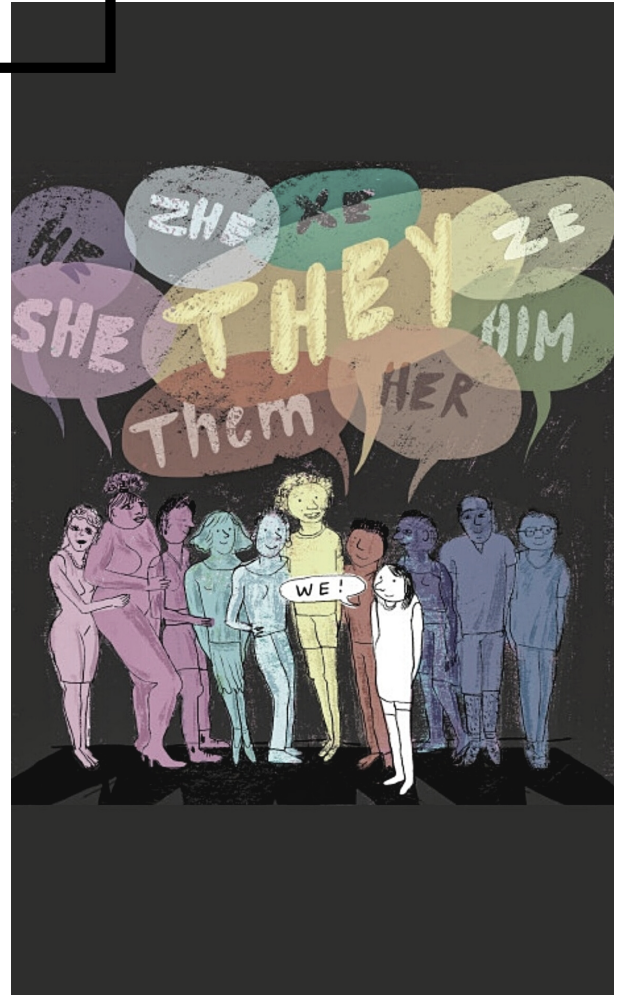


# GENDER AND REPRESENTATION - A DOUBLE EDGED SWORD

*By Ketaki Tyagi*

According to the World Health Organization, gender “refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time.” This means that gender is not biological unlike sex and instead, is socially constructed. However, our understanding of gender has evolved over time.

Gender, in relative terms, is a social and legal status (Planned Parenthood Federation of America, 2021, Sex and Gender Identity). People assume gender is static and based on assigned sex, therefore implying a binary. However, it is more nuanced than that. Gender is not static nor does it exist in a binary, instead it exists as a continuum that is subject to change. It also encompasses more than just the concept of assigned sex, which is a label based on genitalia and the number of chromosomes one is born with. Gender is formed around the expression of an individual’s characteristics and behaviour in social contexts. It has deep cultural influences and expectations. These expectations arise from a set of ideas people have about how men, women and gender diverse people are supposed to act. This notion is more commonly known as gender roles.



Source: [www.transactual.org.uk](http://www.transactual.org.uk)



The umbrella of gender as a social construct covers different aspects of gender itself such as gender expression and gender identity. Gender identity is a core fragment of one's identity. It is a personal and distinctive sense or experience of one's own gender. It begins to develop the moment one is born and continues to progress and develop until death. It is a key aspect of the gender diversity spectrum. Gender expression is the way in which people express their gender identity. The forms of expression include aspects of appearance such as clothes or make-up, the roles they take on in relationships, as well as chosen personal pronouns.

Gender identity can at times be consistent with an individual's assigned sex or can differ from it. When one's assigned sex correlates with their gender identity, they are said to identify as cisgender. Gender diversity comes into play when a person's gender identity doesn't align with the label or sex they were assigned at birth. Trans or transgender is a broad term used to refer to people with gender identities that are diverse and different from stereotypical gender norms. This also encompasses transsexual, gender variant or gender queer individuals.

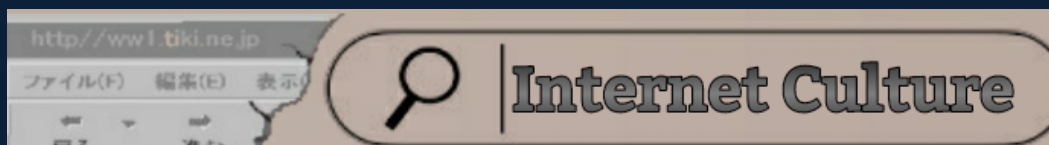
Gender non-conforming individuals are those who do not conform to gender stereotypes. They may or may not identify as trans (Ontario Human Rights Commission, n.d., Gender identity and gender expression). Another aspect of gender diversity is two-spirit, which is a concept prevalent in North America. According to this concept, there was a clear partition along the lines of gender but there was no ubiquitous idea of a gender role hierarchy.

With the advent of the Internet, it is safe to say that information on varying topics is more readily available. Especially before the 2010s, when social media finally took off, gender diverse communities were rarely represented. When they were, it was usually through traditional media in mostly unflattering and inaccurate ways. While transgender folk were represented (rather, misrepresented), people whose gender identity didn't fall on the binary of "man" or "woman" like non-binary or genderfluid persons, weren't represented at all. Now, this definitely doesn't mean that these communities didn't exist - all it means is that traditional media simply refused to acknowledge them.

Once the Internet, more specifically social media took off, access to the stories of different people from all over the world became more readily available. However, this has proved to be a double edged sword. Visibility has an impact on the rights of these communities. People, through social media, are made aware of not only gender but the various intersections of one's identity. On the other hand, this visibility has also led to LGBTQIA+ communities being harassed online. More often than not, we live in echo chambers wherein we forget that while we and the people around us may believe in one thing, there are opinions diametrically opposite to ours. So while the Internet has helped many of us advance in terms of what we do and don't understand about diverse identities, it has also aided in spreading hate and misinformation.

In a country like India, where laws like the Transgender Act of 2019 exist, the Internet has proved to be a useful tool in spreading awareness about why laws like this are not only reductive but also harmful to the trans community. As a non-binary person living in this country, I hope to see more accurate and unbiased representation be realised through a legal framework that understands and protects gender diverse communities. Till this is available to us, we will continue to take and make space not only on the internet but in all spheres of life.





Nowadays, it is very difficult to find someone who is not using the internet or not familiar with it. If we start counting the advantages of the internet, we shall find many but there is also a dark side to it that affects people's lives immensely.

Wastage of time, misuse of the internet, addiction, negative effects on physical and mental health, social isolation, scams and frauds to name a few.



*Illustration by Rapunzel*

# TROLLS GALORE

## TW - REFERENCES TO PORNOGRAPHY, ISLAMOPHOBIA, ANTISEMITISM

*By Kaavya Jacob*

Trolling first emerged as a game through which older members of an online community would tease the newbies and coerce reactions out of them by repeatedly playing pranks. This, over time, continued to give the trolls on multiplayer platforms a sense of belonging within a network where only the senior members were aware of such mocking, eventually leading to the emergence of a well established and organised online subculture committed to making jokes at the expense of others. The act of trolling, however, was not originally connected with propagating online vitriol and derailing discourse in the way that it is today. Trolling communities have risen organically and dramatically over the years, from 4chan users urging iPhone owners to microwave their devices to the employment of Russian troll farms as an apparatus for manipulating information and interfering with the politics of other countries; they have progressed from inconsequential trolling in Multi-user Dungeons (MUDs) in the 80s, with the sole intention of establishing in-group validity, to doxxing 'onlyfans' accounts in 2022 and creating actual physical threats for online personalities.

Over time, they diversified into a variety of sub-communities, each of which is now defined by its deviation from innocuous pranking to a more sinister game of assaulting other social media users and indulging in cyberbullying. Trolls - as accounts operated by individuals or bots - are currently connected with the internet's alt right movement that is marked by its severe antipathy towards minority groups.

Their general approach is to re-create a popular meme template and leverage it to send out provocative messages and entice social media users to react. When such memes are confronted with criticism, trolls adopt a "just kidding" narrative or accuse liberals of not being able to take jokes, even though the memes are far too insulting to be considered funny. This further begs the issue of how alt-right trolls on 4chan and Reddit use seemingly benign memes to openly spew disinformation and hatred with such impunity and no regard for repercussions.

Although a stretch, one may consider Erving Goffman's work in which he compares the presentation of the self in the form of impression management to the performance of a stage actor. In reference to this performance, he suggests that there is a front stage for audience viewing and a backstage where the performers get to be themselves. The unregulated behaviour and impunity of trolls may be explained in terms of deviance from this form of impression management where trolls, owing to their anonymity and lack of physical presence, feel no need to perform impression management and therefore, face no consequences when their backstage is intruded upon - they are putting up a performance with their backstage in clear view of the audience; but there is still no concern for any backlash because of their faceless online personas.



As a result, at a time when activists and human rights defenders are actively using the internet to mobilise and speak out for minority rights, there is also a community of trolls comprised primarily of white supremacist males, venturing beyond right-wing ideals and into vile extremism in the form of humour - 'doing it for the lulz' - which would probably not have been the case had their agency existed physically

Additionally, sites like 4chan (one of the biggest producers of trolls and offensive memes) have a diverse range of boards for different conversation threads ranging from a **hentai** board meant for the exchange of explicit images to a board for conversations that are 'politically incorrect'. A 20-minute scan through one or two of 4chan's boards would reveal unbridled animosity toward women, people of colour, ethnic and religious minorities, and also a false sense of victimhood among the users of the platform.

The board 'politically incorrect' on this platform, is dedicated to discussions on politics and afford its participants the freedom to use derogatory labels. Popular topics of discussion have been jokes related to links between circumcision and IQ with the use of alt-right dialects like (((...))) { triple parentheses } meant to indicate anti-semitic content that mock Jews. Another trend is to begin posts with the phrase 'red pill on...' followed by their version of the 'truth' which is meant to contest or ridicule words spoken by liberal figures on the internet; there have also been calls to kill Biden and talks against 'globohomo' or the global homogenisation of culture.

Additionally, incels have also used the platform to publish screenshots of Reddit threads where women have shared their tales of romantic encounters, and have used them to debate the 'delusional views that women have of good men,' and how incels would be better off building sexbots using 3D printers; alternatively, they brainstorm ideas to find more immersive ways to 'fuck anime pictures' instead.

Trolling occurs among different sects of online **fandoms** as well. Within the **Furry Fandom**, for example, the left leaning **Furries**, known for their emphasis on wanting to provide an inclusive, queer affirmative space and for their eccentric sexual tendencies, are branded as 'horny fetishists' and pitted against alt right furries - the furry counterparts of the anti-globalisation and racist alt right fringe within this fandom. What began as a twitter joke with pro-Trump remarks and political satires with the #altfurries signature has escalated to the point where one side is now issuing violent threats to other furries, even taking their bullying and intimidation offline. Closer to home, we have factions within the right-wing subcommunities of the Trads and Raitas on Twitter, where the trads don't believe the raitas are strong enough in their resolve for Hindutva, and have dubbed the prime minister 'Maulana Modi,' because they believe his regime is 'too soft' on the country's Muslim population, thereby, unreservedly demonstrating their religious intolerance without facing any real consequences.



Source: *behance.net*

To add to the intra-group persecution, the postmodern 'democratic' state has also used the efficacy of trolls and bots in spreading hatred and disinformation to suppress individuals who speak out against the government on social media's open platforms. Governments aiming to quell resistance have since discovered how the same technology that empowers activists may also be used to choke dissent.

Michel Foucault, in 1975, used Bentham's vision of the panopticon - a prison structure where a central watchtower with a unidirectional beam made the power of seeing available only to the guard in the tower- as a euphemism for a society marked by docile bodies under constant impression management due to the fear of surveillance, in his book, *'Death and Punishment'*. This, he observed, was a defining feature of the modern system of governance. Extrapolating from this, one might perceive the evolution of the surveillance society through our present digital age wherein governments exercise heavy surveillance through sponsored troll factories and pervasive technology that act on their behalf to suppress resistance. This is typically accomplished by either doxxing online activists or slandering their character, or by swaying online discourse in a direction that is favourable to the state - trolling has thus altered and even created new ways for 'democratic' societies to monitor and discipline their citizens by allowing internet trolling

Even though trolling can be reported under legal provisions against criminal intimidation and harassment, the anonymity of the digital domain makes it exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to track down the offender and, instead, places a greater burden on the victims. While 'not feeding the trolls' or 'blocking' trolls does not act as a permanent solution, the process of coming up with a policy to end the perplexing and pitiful use of the internet to harass users would entail confronting a number of ethical dilemmas, including the limits to freedom of speech and privacy, and the use of more surveillance by dedicated organisations to counter the current surveillance carried out by trolls paid by authoritarian regimes. Moreover, being forced to only present a specific version of ourselves on the internet for fear of mudslinging trolls defeats the purpose of having an open digital platform. So, while policymakers continue to look for solutions to these problems, the one thing left for us to do is to present ourselves online on our own terms and, well ... hope for the best !

# GLOSSARY

**Alt Right**

"The alt-right, an abbreviation of alternative right, is a loosely connected far-right white nationalist movement, which is a largely online phenomenon.

*source : wikipedia*

**Doxxing**

"the act of publicly revealing private personal information about an individual or organization"

*source: wikipedia*

**Fandom**

"subculture composed of fans characterized by a feeling of empathy and camaraderie with others who share a common interest."

*source: wikipedia*

**Furry Fandom**

"an online subculture interested in anthropomorphic animal characters with human personalities and characteristics"

*source: wikipedia*

**Globohomo**

"combination of 'Globalist' and 'Homogenization', a criticism of the capitalist system that contends it is eroding cultural identities and traditional beauty", often used to justify xenophobia

*source: urban dictionary*

**Hentai**

"anime and manga pornography"

*source: wikipedia*

**Incel**

"an abbreviation of involuntary celibate - a member of an online subculture of people who define themselves as unable to get a romantic or sexual partner despite desiring one, often characterized by resentment and hatred, misogyny, misanthropy, self-pity and self-loathing, racism, a sense of entitlement to sex, and the endorsement of violence against women and sexually active people"

*source: wikipedia*

**Multi-user Dungeons  
(MUDs)**

multiplayer real-time virtual platform, usually for text-based or storyboarded role-playing games ."

*source: wikipedia*

**Only Fans**

"an internet content subscription service popular with sex workers and commonly associated with pornography, but it also hosts the work of other content creators, such as physical fitness experts, musicians and other creators"

*source: wikipedia*

**"Red Pill on ..."**

"used to refer to the core set of beliefs of that community, and people who are "redpilled" or who have "taken the red pill" are those who hold those beliefs. In manosphere communities such as men's rights groups and, according to some researchers, in incel communities as well, "taking the red pill" means seeing a world where feminism has given women too much power over men and male privilege does not exist"

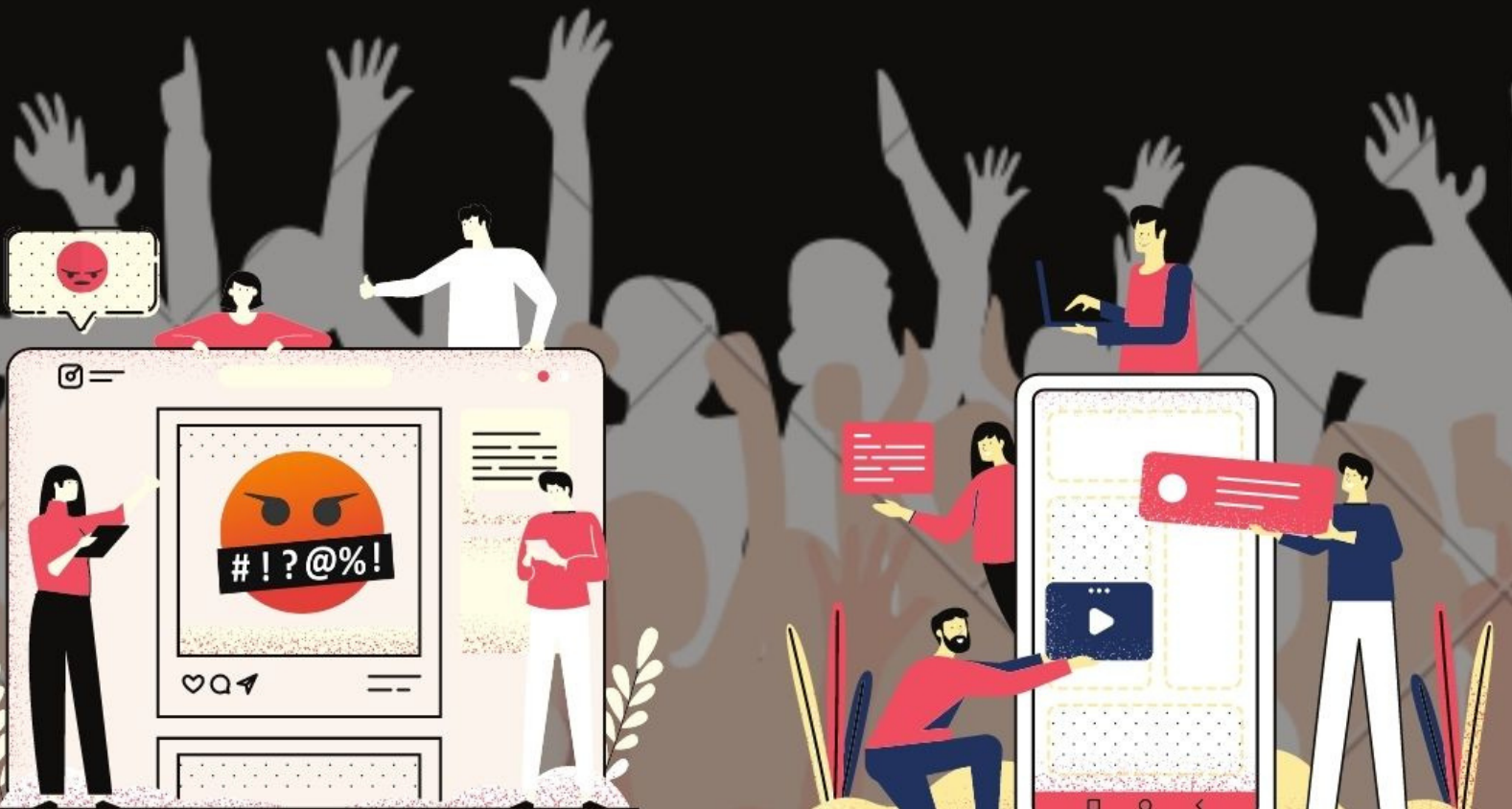
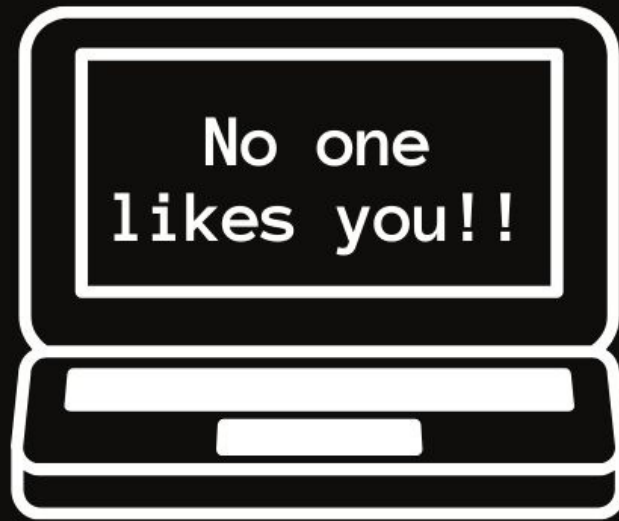
*source: wikipedia*

**(((...))) { triple  
parentheses }**

"an antisemitic symbol adopted as an online stigma by antisemites, neo-Nazis, browsers of the "Politically Incorrect" board on 4chan, and white nationalists to identify individuals of Jewish background as targets for online harassment"

*source: wikipedia*

# "LET'S STOP CYBERBULLYING"



*Illustration by Kashish Minocha*



# INTERNET AS A SHEPHERD OF OPINIONS

*“A lot of our behaviour is driven by what we think other people do and what other people find acceptable”*

*By Soumyaa Somatra*

According to a social media experiment studied by Damon Centola in 2020, it was found that technology has allowed us to access more information and data about people's social networks, debunking many of our assumptions about human behaviour. An undeniable truth in today's world is that social media platforms intensify political polarization by creating "echo chambers" that shield people from information that contradicts their pre-existing ideas or even explore opposing or contradictory viewpoints.

Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have become ingrained in most people's daily routines. Users of social networks are increasingly utilising them to seek information, rather than merely keeping in touch with pals. Users generate opinions depending on the information and comments they find on social media sites. Users in online social networks are no longer merely passive recipients of information but are also actively spreading their thoughts while seeking information and incorporating it into their opinion development. Individuals' opinions are shaped via social networks, which can have a critical impact on political events and decisions. Online, there are no geographical or time limitations because everyone may join in on a conversation at any time. As more individuals join social media platforms throughout the world, these dialogues are being used by social media platforms to offer customers services or even analyse socio-behavioural trends to keep their users interested and active on their platforms.

Today's social media algorithms work in such a way that one only sees the type of posts that one likes or agrees with, narrowing the variety of conversations and, in many cases, making their excessive consumption unsafe.

The *Latent process model* by DeFleur and Westie (1963) describes how attitudes develop. Attitude, according to this paradigm, is a hypothetical construct whose status should be regarded as uncertain. DeFleur and Westie consider attitude to be a process variable in the formation of opinions. The process of generating an opinion comes before the reaction. The latent attitude is formed by combining these stages.

This points our attention to the coexistence of plural virtual identities in the digital world that may facilitate a process of de-individuation – defined as a separation from one's individuated identity – and the adoption of a new group identity. The manipulation of young people's craving for "extimacy" (virtual meetings, virtual dating) to build new social networks and affiliations through intimate virtual interactions and group conversations also aids this process.

The way we communicate has altered as a result of social media. It provides great chances for connection while also isolating people into social 'bubbles' that reinforce and legitimise one's viewpoints. Rather than providing a more comprehensive view of social and political reality, these bubbles simplify matters and render societies more vulnerable to a "mob mentality," since hateful tendencies thrive in an environment where ideas and statements are ignored.

Hate speech over the internet is particularly dangerous since it is difficult to track, qualify, and regulate, even though it reaches a large potential audience. Unfortunately, society is unprepared to deal with this issue since legislative answers are insufficient, and technology companies, no matter how well-intentioned, have yet to come up with appropriate responses. Hate speech criminalisation also poses ethical issues; while it tries to protect people from harm, it also risks curtailing freedom of speech.

Most of the study on the subject consists of descriptive papers on the demographics of online followers of "influencer" groups, and approaches are limited by the difficulty of obtaining information about age, gender, and geography. Most political groups make the youth (within ages 12 to 34) their target audience, for they are considered to be the quickest route to reformation in a nation. The standard technique is to comb through chatrooms and YouTube videos, noting user-profiles and their accompanying remarks, and categorizing them under vague boxes depending on their digital footprints and algorithm.

The research suggests that at its best, social media serves as a supportive environment rather than a driving force for extremism and hate. As a result, although online and offline dimensions are becoming increasingly porous, there is no convincing proof that social media's influence can function independently of other offline elements. In this sense, the Internet and social media can operate as reinforcement since young minds can actively seek and locate content to feed their interests on social media, and therefore become vulnerable to persuasive and extremist opinions.



# Escapades with the Little Blue Bird

*By Akshita Pareek*

If my Twitter timeline had functional vocal chords, it would spill all the beans about my whereabouts in the stealthy corners of grandiose yet embarrassing fandoms, secretly checking on all the relevant tags, keeping an eye for unusual activities, housing fresh updates from the shows: because you see, the goal is to catch 'em all in under fifty seconds.

But if my timeline could speak, it would launch a passionate tirade at me for going all bonkers with my 'following' list—ranging from civil servants to poets, to actors, singers, politicians, sociologists, cricketers, stand-up comics (who also do flimsy political commentaries as side gigs), artists, life coaches, journalists, professors, memers, universities and parody accounts. My timeline would describe in detail how the algorithm was mad at me for two whole days, for taking away its ease of curation, and for giving it a such a hard time at handpicking tweets about the latest Bollywood gossip, only for me to skip them for tweets on geopolitics and soulful shayari.

I like to believe that all my 'retweets' are half baked nachos waiting for me to dip them in the tub of my opinions before serving them to the world that chews at them in half a minute.

*Source : [theswaddle.com](http://theswaddle.com)*



But I like to reserve their use for  
all the controversial positions  
I wanted to take at the dining table,  
but didn't,  
to amplify all the protest marches I wanted to lead,  
but couldn't,  
to find snarky comebacks for my uncle's taunts  
about my impending career,  
only to forget them at the instant I see him,  
but also, to simp over fictional characters  
written by women,  
to follow up on long threads on productivity  
for an immediate ego boost  
and, to stumble across accounts  
that sometimes get too real to handle.

My timeline is a revolution  
nurtured between the folds  
of my emerging political identity  
and midnight existential crises,  
a compromise between  
the rebel and conformist in me,  
a space that compels me  
to shift in my chair,  
looking sideways in confusion,  
towards all the propaganda trying to sway me,  
it is a desperate attempt to  
scramble closer to my purpose in life;  
to be able to use my voice,  
to be situated closer  
to the issues that matter,  
and to drive home that narrative of change

But I have increasingly started to wonder  
whether the blue bird is strong enough  
to carry the burden  
of all the two hundred and seventeen million opinions  
it has to ferry safely, every single day?

*Source : theswaddle.com*

Probably that is why it has chosen to  
offload some of our accounts  
in the scavenging areas of modern day vultures-  
cyber criminals, corporates and political parties,  
their stomachs growling to consume our data,  
as if it were some carcass to feed on.  
So, maybe it is the anxiety about surveillance,  
or the fear of being judged and trolled  
by random netizens,  
that has impelled me to bask in  
this unsettling anonymity that the Internet offers,  
where a sunflower guards my profile picture  
and a caption copied from  
Google's 'List of 157 Captions to Make You Seem Cool'  
adorns my bio.

I camouflage my true identity  
in my eccentric usernames and passwords;  
no one knows me here,  
no one, apart from the supercomputers  
at the Twitter Headquarters, of course.  
They know me, my likes, retweets, upvotes, downvotes  
and conversations  
all too well.





Illustration by Matisha Sharma

# The Internet Humour

*By Ishita Dharwan*

Humour. How do we define it? According to the “internet”, it is the quality of something and/or someone to be comical, especially as expressed in literature or speech. But over time, the sense of it has relatively refashioned. It is safe to say that humour is subjective. This is why, it is important to highlight that what we may see as side-splitting, might not have been as comical to our parents, least to say.

The language of humour has been modified over time. The internet has surely provided us all a platform to display our train of humorous thoughts (inserts a scoff). See here's a pun! Yet another form of expressing jokes but in a witty way. Now some people would appreciate a good use of pun, but others would see it as just another lame joke. During the Victorian Era, puns were in fashion. Good lads would have prized a good pun for having had hearty laughter. But modern times? Nothing works besides a meme.

Memes, reels, and vines are yet a blanket term for various trends contributing to humour. In the era of pop culture, which has not only influenced the youth of our society rapidly but is also slowly inundating different generations of humanity, the only means of sharing hearty laughter is by sharing a meme. Understanding this major shift because of technological advancements and well, changes in the presentation and interpretation of humour throughout the times becomes equally salient. If we inspect deeper, internet humour has birthed a new way of socialization and vocalization. From sharing relatable memes to funny good ole vines with a tap or click to posting and tweeting a social issue expressed by Pepe is amusing.

Maybe because somehow a joke cushions the blow and makes it relatively noticeable but at the same time educates and steers the crowd to have a discussion. Many social media influencers have adopted this way of spreading awareness amongst the public about topics that are considered “taboo” or are simply too political. Although we mindlessly scroll through these reels or memes, we do come across some media content that highlights social issues like gender discrimination, extremism, toxicity etc. This way, in the wake of having a laugh, we also end up educating ourselves.

To imagine that people from earlier times, say, our grandparents would acknowledge and comment “totally relatable!”, “lol” is an understatement. It is only understandable that humour for people was different and confined back then because they did not have any access to “The Pop Culture Enigma” as we have now. You can find almost every other person, be it in a metro, a stall, a bystander, or a passerby scrolling through these trends. The rate at which random videos of strangers become a trending vine, a simple expression from some movie that a majority of people have watched but only gets known after a cascade of amusing memes from the same is overwhelming.





Source: [quizizz.com](http://quizizz.com)

Pop culture consumption is in winnings undoubtedly. But how does it socialize people? Perhaps the answer lies in the question itself. Humour is subjective but it is collective in some ways as well. People can share a similar sense of humour which explains why people share, re-tweet and post these trends as part of pop culture. A relatively new concept of keeping in touch with others has emerged where people share memes, reels etc. to be on “talking terms” with others.

It is amusing to see how pop culture trends are being used in everyday life. From throwing these bits in casual conversations to sharing a collective moment of humour with your peers or acquainting people with serious social issues and the education departments incorporating these trends in their mode of teaching to make it even more interesting and relatable to kids is astonishing, needless to say.

# THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE INFLUENCER CULTURE

*By Vishnupriya Gaur*

*Scrolling, swiping and scrolling again on different apps like Instagram has been a fun way of passing time for most of us. The pandemic further allowed us to indulge in the latest trends, look up to these “influencers” and try our best to follow what they say.*

However, if we try to examine this concept of influencer culture, and dig into what they are doing and how, it becomes far more complex and intriguing. The fact that most of the influencers are young and of the same age as the audience, they are easily able to grab the attention of the people. A lot of us try to imitate the way they dress, speak and carry themselves on a daily basis.

While this culture may be one of the ways through which our personality or choices in general are shaped, it is important to be aware of the fact that these influencers, in addition to acting as a reference group for us, are actively constructing a separate reality for us and for themselves as well! The actual lifestyle of the individual might be very different from what he or she is projecting on social media platforms. It is just like a mirage or an illusion put forth by the influencer.

While this may be perceived as an advantage for the person who is influencing, the person who is actually being influenced may not realise that this is just a construction and the reality could be very different from this. Now, something that really intrigued me was that these influencers don't just promote a particular way of dressing, a genre of music etc., but also do the same in glorifying a particular “lifestyle” or way of living. If we look at it closely, it may be observed that this affects or influences how people interact in general. Influencers have a strong and wide reach that is indicated by the number of followers they have on various platforms, which goes to show that a lot of people are actually watching them every single day, therefore, indirectly conveying that influencers do hold control over their followers or that they do, infact, have the power to influence. Till now, I have talked about this situation from the point of view of the audience, but when it comes to the influencers themselves, it's a lot more than just the happy, chill or fun life that they seem to portray.

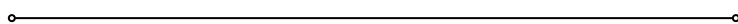
Source: White Rose university Consortium

Since these individuals have to stay connected with the audience they have to post and put up with their life being “out there” for the public to see, which also has its own set of disadvantages since their lives are now open to public debates, opinions and trolling.

Along with this, it is often seen that this sort of a culture caters to only a specific strata or group in society. Taking the example of the fashion influencers, most of them wear clothes from a specific or particular brand, not realising that not everyone has access to such brands and those individuals can only “aspire” to look a certain way that is promoted, since their reality won’t allow them to have access to these brands.

Not just this, I feel we as individuals are attracted to the luxurious or the “romanticised” way of living, which makes it difficult for people who don’t have the resources to do the same. This in-turn points out another problem of class distinctions that exist in society that is further exhibited on social media through trends in an implicit or ‘low-key’ manner. So, the next time you see a trend or post try to observe the pattern that is behind it, and you will probably find something much more fascinating than the number of likes and views on the post.

While social media has the power to reach out to people, help them stay connected etc., it is also important to know, understand, and question whether social media is widening the existing gaps between different groups in society and further impacting individuals in a negative way. I would like for you all to question and introspect for yourselves: without the required resources – be it economic, social or cultural – to follow a trend set by an influencer, how would you be able to keep up? In my view, social media should not be used to influence, but to impact people.







*Illustration by Mitasha Sharma*



# THE SOCIAL DILEMMA : A REVIEW

*By Aditi Krishnamurthy*

Around the end of 2020 (amidst all the chaos of the pandemic), there were increasing conversations around the negative impact of social media on its users. With the real-world consequences of rising misinformation and polarization becoming clearly evident throughout the course of the pandemic, concerns about manipulation and conspiracy theories on social media reached an all-time high. All of this was further pushed into the public conscience with the release of *The Social Dilemma*, an American docudrama, on Netflix. The documentary dives deep into the role of social media platforms in encouraging an addiction and manipulating people's emotions, views and behavior by interviewing numerous former employees, executives, and other professionals from social media platforms like Google, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

The interviewees claim that during the creation of these platforms, social media proved to be an asset - one that was driving positive and meaningful changes at the systemic level and increasing communication around the globe. This quickly changed. Due to the increasing popularity of these platforms, a situation arose where a very small, unrepresentative group of people could influence 2 billion people.

The film explains how advertisers are the customers while the users are actually the product. The only product is the gradual and imperceptible change in the user's behavior and perception. Thus, the business model of these platforms depends on keeping their users engaged to the screen. Shoshana Zuboff, a social psychologist and philosopher argues that social media platforms sell certainty. They do so by collecting lots of data and making great predictions. She calls this surveillance capitalism - a variant of information capitalism that is based on the commodification of "reality" and its transformation into behavioral data for analysis and sales. According to Zuboff, surveillance capitalism (pioneered by Google and Facebook), threatens core values such as freedom, democracy and privacy.



*Source faculty.lsu.edu*

Companies like Facebook, employ algorithmic systems (that study the pattern of behavior displayed by users and make predictions about their future actions) to increase engagement, growth and advertising. These systems have almost no human supervision. These systems persuade users and increase screen time through positive intermittent reinforcements. Thus, it is important to recognize that algorithms can be interpreted as opinions embedded in code, i.e., they are not objective and are optimized to a certain definition of success. These systems affect real world behaviour and emotions without even triggering the user's awareness through subliminal cues. Several studies detail the harmful effects of social media on the mental health and body image of teen kids (especially girls). For e.g., the astronomical increase in suicidal behaviour in teen and pre-teen girls in America after 2011, when social media usage really took off.

These algorithmic systems know everything about you and they work in such a way that users are served customized and different results depending on their personal data like location, interests, etc. Thus, these systems promote confirmation bias along with polarization and divisiveness. The very recommendation engine of these platforms propagates conspiracy theories as they tend to be the ones that garner the most likes and engagement. As such, we get a system that is biased towards false information. Companies like Facebook survive on a disinformation-for-profit business model. The documentary gives the example of Myanmar, where misinformation and hate speech on Facebook, led to real world consequences and added harm to marginalized communities like the Rohingya Muslims.

While it tries to raise awareness about the dire effects of social media, *The Social Dilemma* does have its shortcomings. The film sometimes resorts to simplistic metaphors and dramatizations to get its point across. The film also never explicitly calls for viewers to delete their social accounts and instead promotes “ethical platform design” as the real solution. The interviewees are all former tech executives who continually push the narrative that the creators (and other executives) of these platforms never realized the consequences of manipulating users for maximizing profit. This has been continually proven wrong by ex-employees of such companies who detail the blatant disregard for ethical and moral responsibility by top executives. Ross LaJeunesse, a former executive at Google, raised concerns about a project for a censored search engine called “Dragonfly” that would operate in China. LaJeunesse details how he was side-lined for continually demanding human rights reviews of projects and complaining against a sexist, homophobic and racist work environment. Similarly, Sophie Zhang, a former Facebook employee exposed how abusive political manipulation and opposition harassment was rampant on the platform and how Facebook’s negligence resulted in the manipulation of public discourse by authoritarian regimes. She gave a detailed example of Honduras, where former President Juan Orlando Hernandez controlled several hundred fake entities on Facebook and artificially boosted his apparent popular support. Zhang claimed that Facebook waits for media coverage and ignores issues that don’t garner negative media coverage.

The film also promotes the idea that algorithmic recommendation engines are the root of the problems. It fails to take into account how propaganda, bullying and misinformation are so much more complicated. While the film briefly mentions how misinformation spread through WhatsApp inspired lynchings in India, it fails to analyse how WhatsApp functions with no algorithmic interference like Facebook and yet it is still home to numerous false narratives. This means that social media platforms aren’t primarily driven by algorithms, but that they exploit the internet’s ability to connect like minded people. Thus, confirmation bias reinforces itself as users turn away from any messages that challenge them. **“The more users engage with politically like-minded others online, the less likely it is that they will be challenged for dysfunctional behavior. Over the longer term, these people are less likely to encounter the kind of opposition that might make a difference to the quality of the news they share.” (Chadwick 2018)**

There is an urgent need for legislative reform and regulations around data privacy and the flow of personal data. The General Data protection Regulation was implemented in Europe in 2018 as a blanket legislative protection designed to provide individuals more control over their personal data. Government oversight is desperately needed to ensure that platforms like Facebook don’t continue to function as breeding grounds for radicalization, propaganda and misinformation.

# CULTURE: THAT FADED OUT MINE

*By Akshina Ghosh*

1983 marked the victory of thee  
Thine triumph over disparity,  
A severance thou couldn't foresee  
An enchanted tyranny.

Thine vigorous efforts to conserve Time,  
That thou let slip untax'd;  
In strive to trounce the Rhine,  
Thou assent to losses unreckon'd.

A game of masquerade thou art entail  
perpetually  
Fabricating the world bone fide;  
In a world thou deluded had thousands  
to accompany,  
Withal none by thy side.

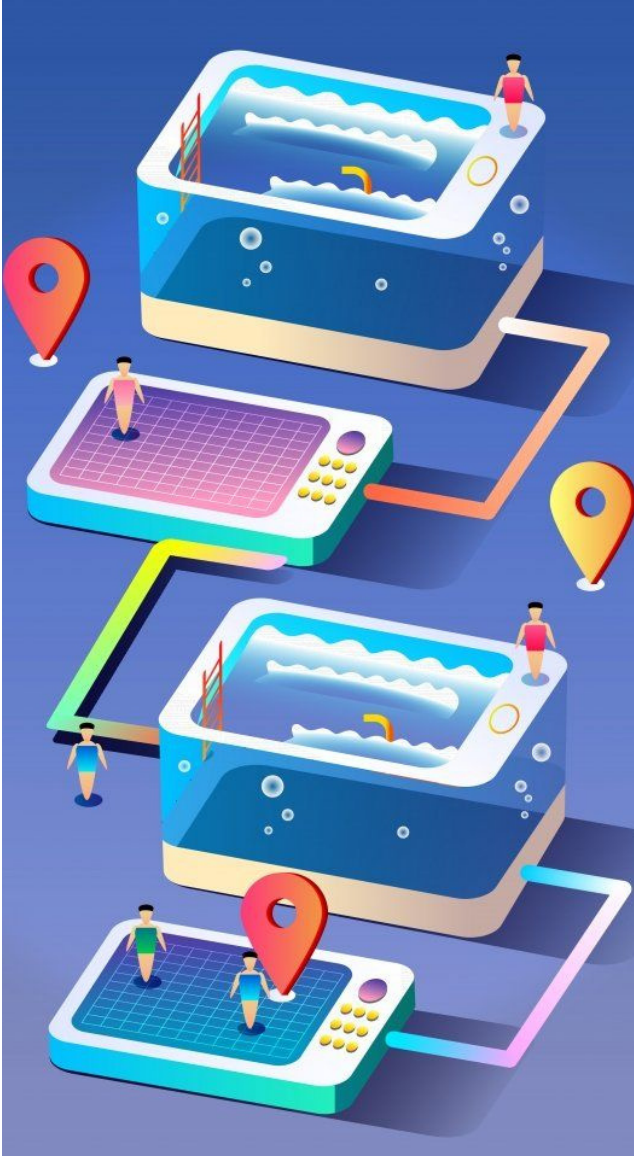
Today, albeit thou art taking the  
trodden trail  
Yet thy think this prevail?

*Source: Manga Productions*



# सुविधा का दूसरा नाम इंटरनेट

पायल शर्मा, हिंदी विभाग

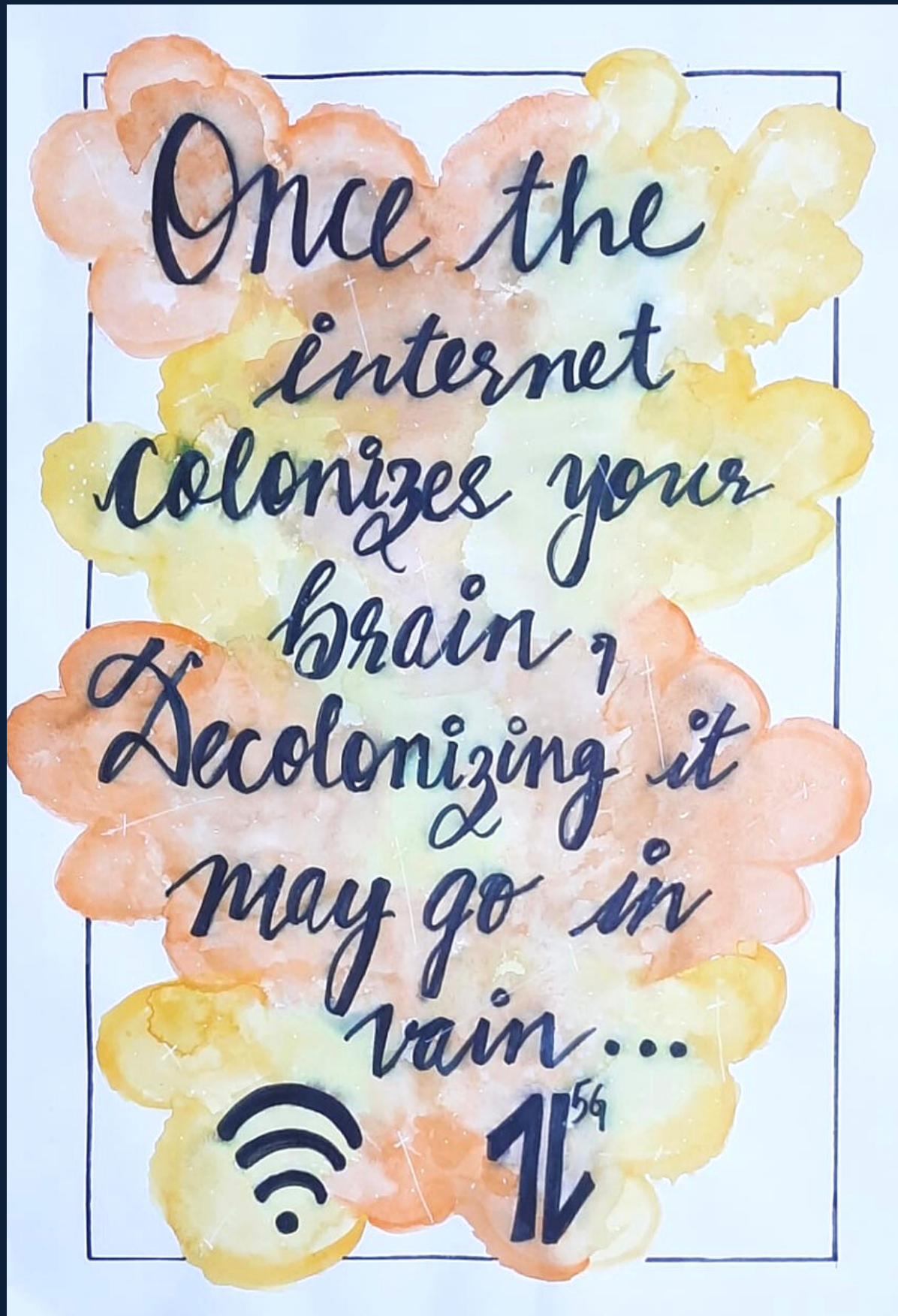


Source: pngTree.in

इंटरनेट मनुष्य को विज्ञान द्वारा दिया गया एक सर्वश्रेष्ठ उपहार है। इंटरनेट अनंत संभावनाओं का साधन है। पहले के समय में जब लोगों के पास इंटरनेट की सुविधा नहीं थी, तो उन्हें कई प्रकार के सामान्य कार्यों के लिए भी कई घंटों तक लाइनों में लगे रहना पड़ता था। परन्तु जैसे ही इंटरनेट आया और इसका विकास हुआ, तो आज मनुष्य इसके द्वारा अपना हर कार्य चुटकियों में करता है।

सं १९६९ में टिम बर्नर्स ली ने इंटरनेट का अविष्कार किया। यह सब से पहले अमेरिका के प्रतिरक्षा विभाग द्वारा एडवांस रिसर्च प्रोजेक्ट एर्जेसी नेटवर्क के गुप्त आंकड़ों और सूचनाओं को दूर दराज के विभिन्न राज्यों तक भेजने व प्राप्त करने में लाया गया था। हमारे भारत में वस्तुतः इंटरनेट १९८० के दशक में आया और अब तक इसका विकास तेज़ी से हो रहा है। इंटरनेट आज मानव जीवन में अपनी बहुत महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाता है। मानव आज इंटरनेट द्वारा अपना हर कठिन कार्य आसानी से कर लेता है और प्रत्येक मानव आज इसकी महत्वता के लिए गाता है - "इंटरनेट चलाना है, जीवन को जीने का नया तरीका लाना है।"

हम सभी कहीं न कहीं इस बात से सहमत तो होंगे ही परन्तु एक सिक्के के दो पहलु ज़रूर होते हैं। इसी तरह इंटरनेट में भी महत्वता और बुराइयां दोनों हैं परन्तु यह मानव पर निर्भर करता है की वह इसका प्रयोग किस तरीके से करता है। अंत में इंटरनेट के हमारे जीवन में प्रवेश के साथ ही हमारी दुनिया बड़े पैमाने पर बदल गयी है। वर्तमान स्थिति में मानव का प्रत्येक कार्य इंटरनेट के द्वारा हो रहा है। चाहे वह ऑफिस कार्य से लेकर घर तक का कार्य हो। इंटरनेट आज मानव का सच्चा मित्र बन गया है और इसका विकास भी तेज़ी से हो रहा है।



Once the  
internet  
colonizes your  
brain,  
Decolonizing it  
may go in  
vain...



# YOUTUBE:

## GATEWAY TO AN EMACIPATORY CULTURE

*By Sayna Mishra*

**Patriarchy or not, women have always been the backbone of the society. Be it in the hunting gathering society where they used to go to the forest to forage for food to present day modern society where they are juggling both household chores and professional careers. The catch however, is that these women earn more than 50% of income, and are still expected to manage the home front. The misery is even more for a woman who stays at home all day and makes the home hospitable for their husband and children. This category of women are called housewives or homemakers. This term originated in 13th century Europe when the middle classes started emerging.**

These classes were placed between the serfs and the landlords and therefore had the liberty to own a piece of plot. Now that they had a home; the house dwellers were named 'husband'- house plus bonded and the opposite of it was 'housewife'. Both husband and housewife used to handle the chores until the industrial revolution. With the coming in of industries, employment rose and the husbands had to now go out to seek jobs. This left the women in the house dealing with all the chores single handedly. Another change which came about in the 19th century with the industrial revolution was the downsizing of families from joint or extended to nuclear families. Earlier there used to be multiple female relatives who would share the workload with each other.

But with the influx of people in the cities, they left behind their large families giving rise to the creation of nuclear families. Now the sole responsibility of the family fell on the shoulders of the wife. However one respite which these women got was the availability of maids or charwomen as domestic labour had become incredibly cheap. But the Housewives were reduced to the status of what they are today between the time period of both the world wars. When the men were called out to participate in the war, the market opened itself for the women causing a reduction in the pool of domestic labour. The housewives were still able to manage until world war II, where women of all classes began working and filling in the vacancies left behind by men. This gave a sense of semblance and meaning to women.

*Source: bitlander.com*



However when the war got over and men came back to reclaim their jobs, women were pressured to leave and go back to handling the house. And this time they didn't even have the luxury of a charwoman as the women from the lower classes still had to work to sustain themselves. Hence without family or staff to help out, a 1950s housewife spent no more time with her children than a modern working mother because it was more or less a full-time job to keep the house clean and the family fed.

Since then the housewives continue to be a marginalised section who have been ignored by the patriarchs of the society. Waves of feminism came and went but we did not see any significant change in the situation of housewives. Today we see men have started helping the women in running the household but still it remains primarily the domain of women and even if men do help, we never hear the end of it. The idea of a housewife going out to work is very repulsive as it symbolises the inconsistency of the husband to earn for his family. Even in the COVID era, the housewives have been more on the receiving end of their partners frustration and even violence. In all this, the housewife as a set of coping skills, a moral paradigm of care, fades away; she is a victim of her inflicted illiteracy. In such a scenario, the internet has proved to be a saving grace for these women. Not only has it helped them transcend from their boring monotonous lives but also gives them an avenue to showcase their skill and talent and get

paid and appreciated for it. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram and Facebook have acted like a support system for these women, allowing them to feel alive again. 46.1% of global users are women and are in close competition with men who stand at 53.9%. This is a huge number with respect to women coming at par with men when it comes to creating and consuming content. India provides a viewership of 467 million and the entire region of Asia/Pacific upto 30% of total viewership on Youtube. This shows that the third world nations, especially women are actually using the internet to uplift themselves.

The third most popular category on Youtube today is the 'How to' tutorial and as we all know, female content creators are the most dominant in this field. The avenue for female content creators is more with respect to make-up tutorials, kitchen tips, cooking channels, DIYs, hauls and even reviews of clothes. Male content creators also have a wide avenue but not as varied as women and in today's time when everyone is learning to be independent, tips on cooking and managing the house go a long way. Demographically if we were to view this even more at depth among the women, the housewives are more proactive in making these videos as not only is it their forte but they also enjoy imparting a little bit of 'nuska' which they have learnt in their lives. This explains the viewership of 8.36 million on food channels across genres.

Another form of video which women are excelling at is daily vlogging. It is also the most watched category on YouTube today and comes under the genre of commentary.

Daily vlogging is a great way for us to appreciate the hard work which housewives do, that often goes unnoticed.

The likes of Nisha Madhulika and Kabita Singh have shown us that being a lifestyle vlogger can also be a very good career option for housewives who are made to feel inadequate for not being able to earn. Apart from Youtube, with facebook and instagram being equally popular these creators have started putting their content there as well in the form of short clips of 30 to 60 seconds. This incites interest in people's minds, making them check out their page on Youtube. They also learn the skills of marketing, editing, advertising and even communicating with a larger audience apart from quite naturally earning money. For every 10k views the creator earns between Rs 200-500 and it can go upto Rs 30,000 for 1 million views. In certain cases it also gives the woman satisfaction that she is contributing to the nation's development as her earnings can be taxable depending on whether it can be GST registered or not. Her earnings now are also used to satisfy the middle class dream of owning a car or a house of their own as the salary of the husband is usually used to pay the bills.

**Hence with the coming in of technological revolution, it has provided a safe space for the housewives to learn new skills apart from their daily activities. The content created by them caters to the larger audience and enables them to experiment new things in their everyday life.**

This relatability and their presence across digital platforms makes them a part of the internet culture as not only have they started a spark of revolution which will soon turn into a movement; but at the same time with the content they are creating we witness a consistent challenging of stereotypes and patriarchy which deserves nothing but numerous pages in history books. Therefore irrespective of the several banes which the internet is capable of, its ability to emancipate the subjugated women in the name of tradition has been its biggest boon till date. Even though, like most of the spheres in the world, the internet remains male dominated, the statistics of 46% of women being global users gives us a belief that we will soon be reaching the finishing line. In this context, we can happily announce that the internet and its global reach has not only emancipated the women from the drudgery of repetitive work from a family cocoon, but also helped in harnessing that captive talent to get a worldwide view and appreciation. It might have helped them financially, but the mental satisfaction and the feel good factor is the real gain in developing the culture of resurgent woman power. This new development would soon be a great propellor for social, cultural and economic development of the society, as it would be successful in realizing housebound human resources into real world transactions.

# THE WILD, WONDERFUL, AND WARPED WORLD OF ONLINE GAMING COMMUNITIES

*By Aneet Bindra*

**The Internet: Glorious invention of the 90s, saviour and ravager of mankind, an odd sort of intangible entity worthy of awe second to no God. Who would have thought, over a 100 years ago, that we'd be walking around carrying these mystical portable portals in hand, connecting us to faraway lands with a simple, "Hey Siri!"? If you happen to be a Gen-Zer, you're probably rolling your eyes at how I make such a mundane, banal thing like a cellphone sound like a rare artefact on Genshin Impact. I mean really? It's 2022- the internet is like, totally vintage.**

But that doesn't make it any less important- in fact, today, the internet deserves its very own plane within the pyramid of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and the cellphone may as well be an extension of the human form itself- considering how both have become as natural and integrated into our day-to-day lives as eating breathing and sleeping. Among these basic functions of human life, we now have an additional barrage of activities that have become second nature to us- scrolling, chatting, tweeting, and of course, gaming.

The high FPS, high adrenaline, ever so vibrant and dynamic world of online gaming would entice anyone at first sight- stunning graphics, engaging quests and adventures, as well as intricate video game storylines oftentimes make for a welcome retreat from the monotony of the real world. Over the numerous great lockdowns of the 2020s, online gaming platforms became a place of both recreation and refuge, especially for the youth who were lacking the much-needed social interaction and intellectual stimulation that is needed at a young age.

Source : VectorStock Photos



Gaming, unsurprisingly, is one of the most common ways in which online friendships are forged- games like Fortnite, Valorant, BGMI and Call of Duty among others have spawned their own separate fan bases and communities, uniting gamers across the world in their pursuit of not only high scores and street cred, but also of meaningful social interaction in this stay-at-home era. It's easier than ever today to communicate online- meanwhile offline communication begins to become a rarer commodity with people immersed within their cellphones and multitude of gadgets, raking in screen-times anywhere between upto 7-10 hours per day.

Gaming, like most other recreational activities, has a special social significance. Historically, games have always been a medium to bring people closer together, be it to strengthen informal relationships like friendships or to fortify formal relations such as business deals or political relations. Similar to the role sports such as golf and pool play in social life, often helping to exalt an individual's social status, the ability to play online games is fast becoming an essential addition to one's arsenal of skills- a brownie point that adds to one's "cool quotient".

The textbook definition of an "online community" is a group of people, who share a common space on the internet where they can freely interact and communicate their shared interests and common goals. Gaming communities serve to connect individuals who either compete or cooperate with each other in order to enrich their experience of online video games.

Interestingly, you don't even need to actually be a gamer to engage within the numerous gaming communities that populate the world wide web- many gamers, as well as non-gamers, enjoy watching hours-long gameplay streams on platforms like Youtube and Twitch- a fact that may befuddle those who may be wondering, "why would someone ever spend so much time watching someone else play a game?" Streamers build their own niches within the gaming community, garnering views and followers- who usually consist of those looking to learn new strategies and improve their gaming technique through practical demonstrations. For non-gamers, gameplay streams have a pure entertainment value, akin to the consumption of any other multimedia content online. Streamers incorporate fun commentary and add jest to the gameplay by making fun banter with other players in games with multiplayer settings, making for an interesting watch to pass the time.

The phenomenon of online gaming is one that ought to be dissected and thoroughly understood in the multidimensional context it exists- it could be a prism of opportunity or a blackhole of wasted time and labour. Most often in society, gaming is shunned as a fool's errand and a meaningless hobby that yields no fruit.



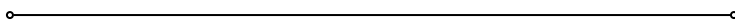
Above all, people seem to be of the belief that online gaming sets the precedent for anti-social behavior- what with youth being locked up all day in their rooms, staring at their computer screens for hours on end instead of “going out and getting some fresh air”. Although to some degree, this postulation may hold true- but what older generations fail to understand is that social interaction is no longer what it used to be- as dynamic and ever-changing as it is, it would be unjustified to ignore the fact that for our generation, online interaction has, in fact, become the norm.

“It’s me or the PS5”, sings Salem Ilese in her popular song, “PS5” in collaboration with K-Pop group TXT, echoing the sentiment of our era where modern-day ballads are inspired not by themes of heartbreak and infidelity, but of love taking a backseat to gaming and other such, almost outlandish distractions.

Although dismissed as pseudo-communities, there is no question that online gaming communities have been the beginning of many great online friendships and a means to foster social connections for many, especially during the last two years of the pandemic- radically transforming what social interaction looks like in the modern day. Online interaction has begun to gain equal footing with face-to-face relationships, although the latter can never and should never be alarmingly displaced.

So plug in your headsets, log into your Discord chat rooms and choose your favorite characters to play another round- but make sure to log back into the real world from time to time!

Gamers, non-gamers, and noble netizens of the World Wide Web, here’s to making our peace with the Times, and our Screen-Times, and finding a place somewhere between online and offline.



# THE BTS FAN COMMUNITY

*By Sumedha Vashista*

Whether you are a fan or not, everyone around the globe has heard of BTS, the popular seven-member Korean band taking the world by storm. BTS is an acronym for the Korean name Bangtan Sonyeondan (방탄소년단) which roughly translates as Bullet-proof boy scouts. Though mostly focusing on pop music, they experiment with a variety of genres on universally important themes like youth, self-love, capitalism, social critique and mental health that resonate with a diverse audience across borders. The package of music with hard-hitting lyrics is accompanied with a confection of colourful costumes and energetic choreography which serve as icing on the cake. Beyond music and performances, the group keeps fans engaged with a sea of content, from their own weekly variety show Run BTS! to short YouTube behind-the-scenes clips and interactive lives.

Whenever BTS is discussed, mentions of their passionate fanbase called 'ARMY' are never far behind in the conversation. While the BTS fandom name ARMY stands for 'Adorable Representative MCs for Youth' the military nature of the acronym is quite fitting for the level of mobilisation seen within the fandom.



*Source: aptoide.com*

The ARMY, ranging from teenagers to senior citizens, is a broad demographic comprising many races, professions and nationalities. It is also a predominantly female fan following, of a group which falls under the category of 'boyband'. What sets them apart from other fan bases is that they are not passive listeners, but actively engaged consumers and even promoters of the band. Spread by word-of-mouth, online and in-person, has been key for the success of the seven- a foreign band (with predominantly Korean lyrics and only one fluent English speaker) which did not start promotions targeted beyond the domestic market until much later in the game, and garnered mainstream Western media coverage only after their 2017 Billboard Music Awards appearance.

The ever-growing BTS fandom is notorious for its large online presence and high count of social media engagements. The ARMY primarily congregates on Twitter. Twitter as a platform is unique. It is more suited to fan activity than Instagram, which is individualistic and image driven. Twitter on the other hand is text based and allows for the option of retweets that remain on your profile forever and show up on all your followers' timelines even if they are not following the original poster- as opposed to sharing posts on fleeting Instagram stories with limited reach. Information spreads faster on Twitter and enables fandoms to have wider interactions within themselves, facilitating the creation of a shared culture and community, replete with inside jokes and lingo.

As opposed to conventional fan forums, Twitter is also host to a large number of 'outsiders': non-fans and users with other interests. Fans can connect not just with each other but also with these people outside the fandom. The ARMY is aware of this and their power in numbers and leverage it in the form of hashtag campaigns and trends.

These campaigns can be for various purposes- to promote the group's latest release, to win public voting music awards, and for championing social justice causes endorsed by the group such as #StopAAPIHate, against the concerning rise in violent attacks on people of Asian descent during the coronavirus pandemic.

Back in June 2020, BTS and its record label Big Hit Entertainment donated \$1m to Black Lives Matter in the US. The ARMY subsequently crowdfunded and matched that figure in 24 hours by using #MatchAMillion.

Georg Simmel and Émile Durkheim wrote about the importance of studying patterns of relationships that connect social actors; social network analysis can be used to connote complex sets of relationships between members of social systems at all scales, from interpersonal to international. Observation of the BTS fandom activity on Twitter reveals that they organise and mobilise themselves in a unique way.



The ARMY informally organises itself around nodes, which are typically accounts with large followings on Twitter.

The central nodes are of course the two official BTS accounts: @BTS\_twt and @bts\_bighit. Revolving around these, the network of large accounts and smaller fan accounts forms a self-supporting ecosystem, with different accounts serving varied functions for the fan community.

One can find dedicated BTS content translators, accounts tracking the band's position on music charts, accounts encouraging streaming, hourly picture upload accounts, BTS fashion updates, monthly fan-supported charity projects, accounts promoting voting for awards, and general update accounts. This can be understood through the theory of functionalism- where society (in this case the fandom) can be understood as something greater than the sum of its parts.

There are also accounts in a more artistic vein, driven by fan labour to create works inspired by the band. One can find a lot of content such as fanfiction, fanart, animations, posters, edits and compilations primed for catering to a niche audience.

There is even an account dedicated to comparing BTS member Seokjin's wide shoulders to matching pictures of refrigerators. Though uploaded on YouTube, a special mention belongs to The Rise of Bangtan - a professional documentary level fan-made series chronicling the rise of the band.

Some content such as posters promoting new songs and translated lyric videos are also intended for spread and consumption beyond the fanbase, targeted at the general public and potential fans. The ARMY's grassroots strategies of marketing and capturing interest are worth studying and learning from. The activities of the label and artists to keep this proactive fanbase constantly engaged and entertained with clues and events are also worth noting. According to Durkheim, symbols have a deeper social meaning attached to them and are a representation of the collective. The BTS fan community is rife with such symbolism. Fans identify each other with the superscript 7 in their Twitter display names (for seven members), and other more obvious markers like a BTS profile picture. Purple is a colour popularly associated with the band. A flood of purple hearts and use of the phrase "I purple you" (보라해- borahae) is commonly seen.



Source: koreaboo.com

This group solidarity is strengthened by Durkheimian moments of collective effervescence. Attending a BTS concert is of course one such moment, but online listening parties where thousands experience the same songs together, BTS livestreams on the vlive app, and live tweeting about award shows and appearances also create these moments of heightened collective emotion, even when fans are not in physical contact.

One such instance of spontaneous solidarity was on the day of the release of the remix 'Butter feat. Megan Thee Stallion' which had fans sport matching Twitter layouts (a layout is a combination of a profile picture and header) with a pink heart background inspired by the teaser photos. The trend saw Megan Thee Stallion and BTS themselves also jumping in. It was a symbolic show of support and community without even doing any actions that would count as an interaction by the platform algorithm; the online equivalent of wearing matching outfits with friends.

The BTS fan community is not just a cocoon of positivity and K-pop fuelled escapism. It can also be a negative space that causes stress. Toxic fan wars and rifts between those who stan all BTS members vs a particular member can cause tensions. Twitter 'cancel culture' is also seen in the fandom, where old tweets may be dug up without context and used to target people. An emerging problem is crypto scams, where crypto currency and NFT promoters are attempting to infiltrate and leverage fan spaces for their own gain, thereby misleading fans.

Controversial content by fansites - which are essentially stalkers or illegally sneak in high quality cameras at concerts and sell the pictures for personal profit- gives rise to heated debate over whether to consume and post this content or not. Warranted criticism of radio and talk show hosts for racist comments about the band and misogynistic jokes directed at fanbase also cause furore. In addition to discussing and fangirling over their favourite band, the ARMY is also a politically aware fandom that routinely raises its voice against oppression. A lot of information and awareness about LGBTQ+ issues, gender dynamics, racism, cultural appropriation and geopolitical conflicts and crisis such as the recent ones in Palestine, Afghanistan and Ukraine is spread on fan pages, along with ways to contribute. In this way the line between leisure interests and socio-political activism is blurred, and the same existing fan networks are utilized to mobilize support for these causes.

In conclusion, there is a lot that we as sociologists can learn from observing and studying online fan communities and the unique ways in which they organise and mobilize themselves to achieve common objectives- and what might motivate them to do so. **The BTS ARMY in particular would prove to be a case study of interest for anyone in the field of marketing. The dynamics within fandoms, differences in fandom culture across platforms, factors involved in the creation of a loyal fan base and the possible future of fan communities as reliable consumption markets are all important potential areas for further inquiry.**

# SOCIAL MEDIA AND HYPERREALITY: WHAT IS EVEN REAL?

*By Annapurna*

*"The simulacrum is never what hides the truth - it is truth that hides the fact that there is none. The simulacrum is true."*

*Jean Baudrillard*

In the 21st century, social media platforms have emerged as mediums where disagreements over topics can spark into heated debates. These debates especially in a politically polarised era become even more volatile. What one often hears from these debates are doubts regarding the credibility of the sources used. Here, facts aren't observed as objective truths until it is grounded in a context; an ideology. Determining what is true and what is not becomes a tedious exercise in such cases. At a broad level, such contestations of what is real and what is not was elaborated upon by a French sociologist, Jean Baudrillard, in his work *Simulacra and Simulation* in 1981.

According to Baudrillard, the extensive usage of signs and symbols to explain reality has moved us farther away from reality. It has become difficult to draw a distinction between where reality stops and simulation begins and whether at all they can be separated into separate and objective categories. To explain his case further, Baudrillard mentions an old fable about a kingdom and its map.

Once upon a time, an emperor wanted an accurate map of his kingdom. To make this vision come true, he hired the best cartographers he could find. These map makers embarked on the mission of making a detailed and precise map. Soon, the map became so large that it physically covered the lengths and breadths of the empire. After the empire faded away, only the map remained. The future generations took it as the reality of a bygone era when it was just a simulacrum of reality. This is what Baudrillard believed was happening with media in the 20th century.

Signs and symbols which were planned to be used as markers of reality have formed an alternate reality altogether, i. e. hyperreality. The cultural trends on social media platforms are vividly shaped by this phenomenon. Even though Baudrillard conceptualised this phenomenon 40 years ago and his focus was on print and other forms of media prevalent at that time, his work has become all the more relevant today.



Source: Pinterest

According to Baudrillard, the disassociation of the symbol or simulacrum from reality and the creation of a simulation happened in three successive phases in the 20th century.

*it is the reflection of a profound reality;  
it masks and denatures a profound reality;  
it masks the absence of a profound reality  
it has no relation to any reality whatsoever: it is its own pure simulacrum. (Baudrillard, 1994)*

Scholars have used this theory of hyperreality to explain two distinct phenomena. One, social media and the construction of self identity. Two, the growing prominence of ideology in interpreting 'facts'. The former engages with individual identity while the latter analyses dialogues between two or more communities on digital forums.

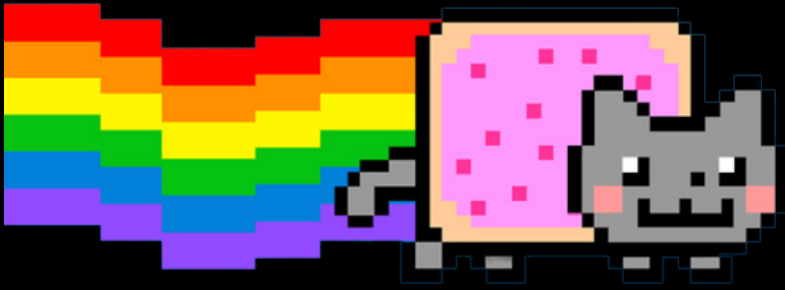
The first phenomenon is something that all social media users are familiar with. It deals with construction of self identities on social media platforms. While one's profile is a representation of their real life persona but is it completely the same? Does not being completely same means one's identity on social media isn't real?

Where can the distinction between real and virtual be drawn? Can they be separated at all? These questions of reality and the formation of a hyperreal existence becomes a central aspect in this sphere.

Similarly, credibility of facts is detected from the nature of its sources. There is a hostile interaction between alt right and radical left sources in numerous countries. The same 'fact' maybe be presented in diametrically opposite contexts which can change the narrative altogether. Such actions lead to contestations over the question of 'truth'. Whose version of the truth can be considered reality?

Such questions and phenomena are a direct product of the postmodernist school of thought. More than philosophical inquires, these questions shape the trajectory of people's daily lives. They decide identities, perceptions, political inclinations which further determine power relations. Given the crucial importance of symbols and hyperreality, it is important to be aware of simulations and the larger structural processes of the platforms we engage in.





# "owning the memes of production"

yours truly, team Meraki and the internet

# SOCIOLOGY STUDENT



What my friends think I do



What my mom thinks I do



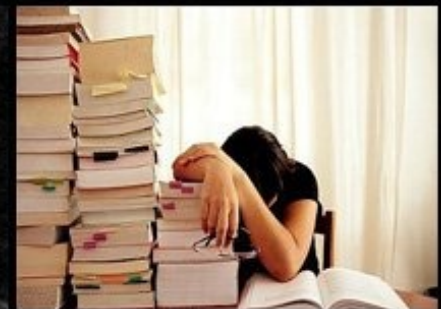
What society thinks I do



What my thesis advisor thinks I do

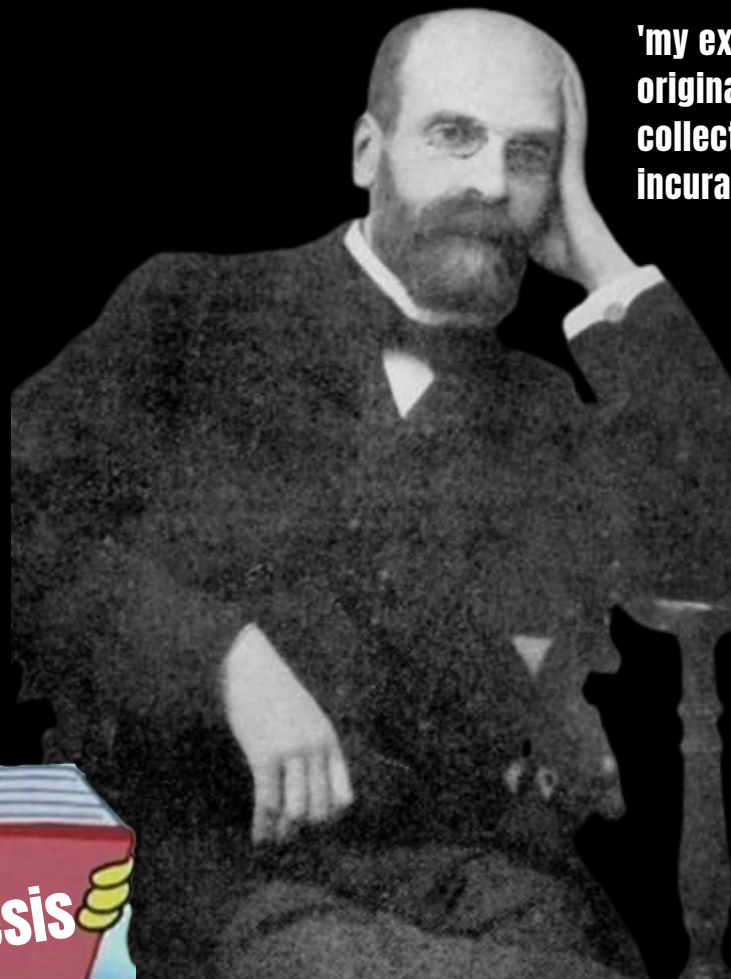
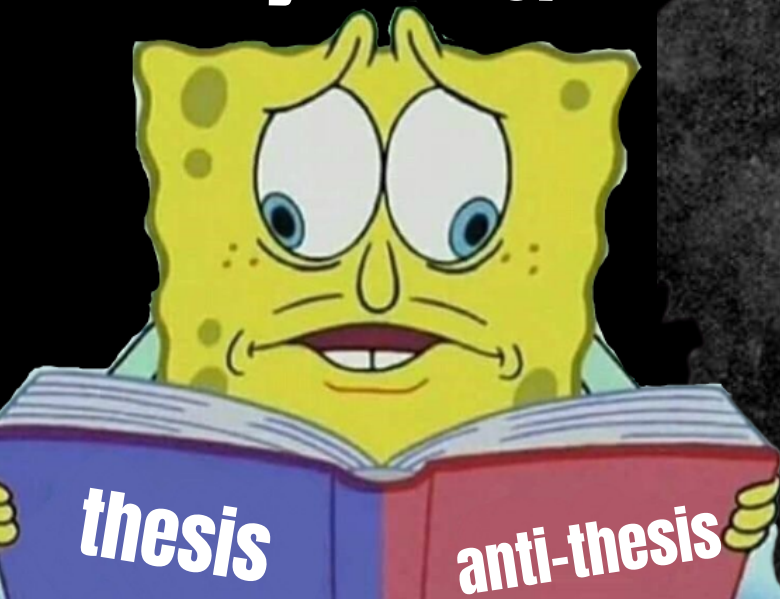


What I think I do



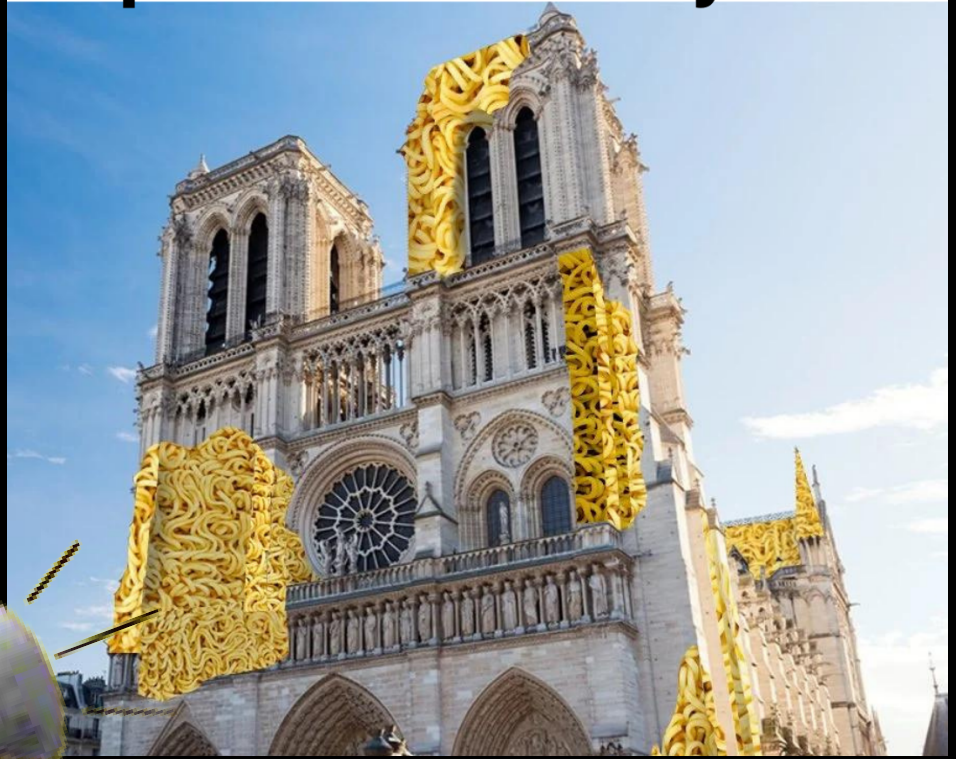
What I actually do

synthesis?



'my existential crisis originates from the collective thus, incurable.'

# Functionalists fixing problems in society





I don't always start a revolution but when I do



I DO IT WITH CLASS



anushmita7 @mitra\_anushmita · 8s

\*Capitalism rules the world for more than 100 years without collapsing\*

Marx:



anushmita7 @mitra\_anushmita · 46s

Q. How is sociology different from social anthropology?

Indians:



Styles



Marx





# EDITORIAL BOARD



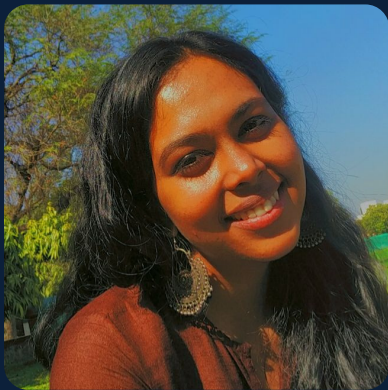
Aneet Bindra



Kaavya Jacob



Sayna Mishra



Tanya Yadav



Aditi Krishnamurthy



Annapurna



Gaivina Dhillon



Hadia Rehman

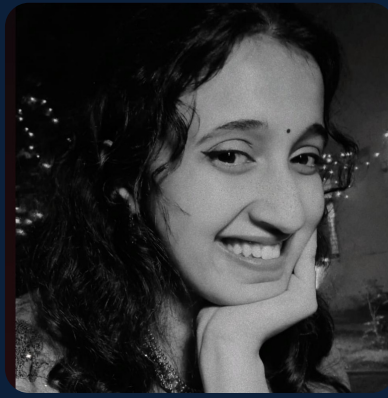


Kashish Minocha





Mitasha Sharma



Nistula Singh



Sumedha Vashista



Vani Nirwan



Saanvi Pani



Soumyaa Somatra

# FACULTY CO-ORDINATORS 2021-22



Dr. Sabiha Mazid



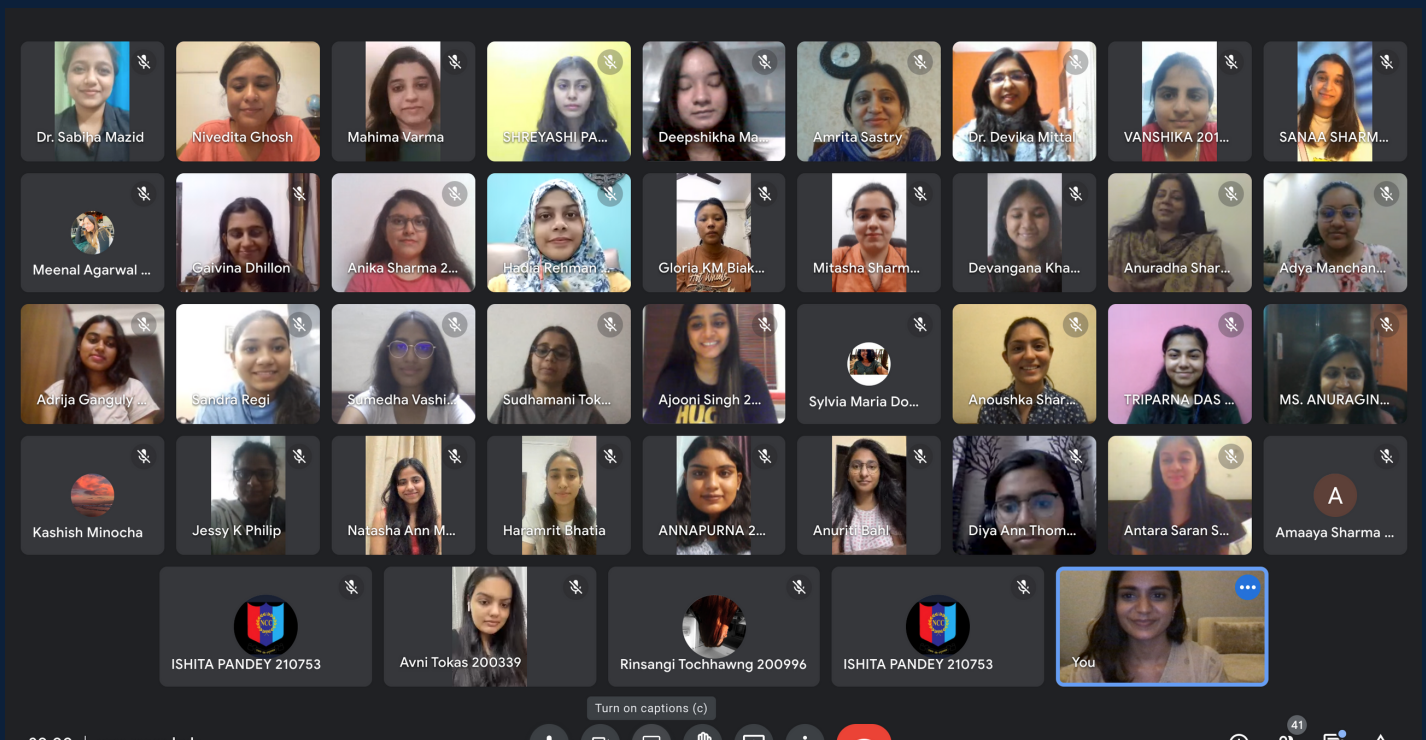
Dr. Devika Mittal

# BATCH OF 2022





# BATCH OF 2023





# BATCH OF 2024

