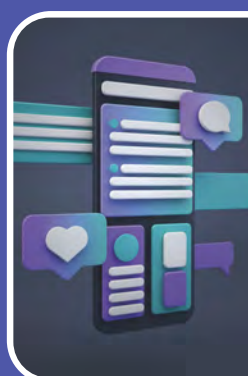
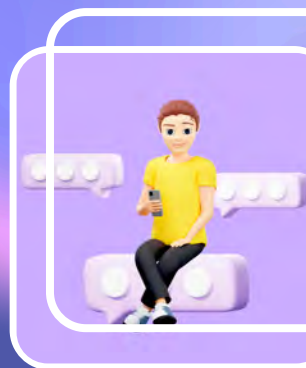




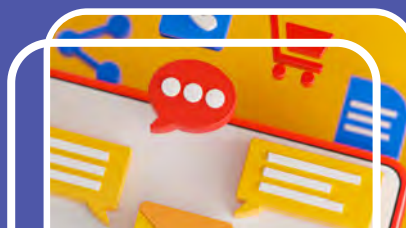
HERITAGE LAW COLLEGE

DIA-LA(W)-GUE

REEL VERSUS REAL: SOCIAL MEDIA AND FREE SPEECH



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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Hello everyone!

Warm Greetings from Team Dia-La(w)-Gue!

We are particularly pleased to announce the publication of the 8TH edition of our beloved **E-Magazine Dia-La(w)-Gue**. As always, we are indebted to the blessings and best wishes of our well wishers without which the journey of the Magazine would not have been possible. In the last few editions, we have attempted to incorporate a number of new sections, adequately reflecting the far reaching impact of our College Magazine which, over the years, has travelled beyond the confines of the class room to publish contributions from legal professionals, academicians, media personalities and other renowned personalities from different fields.

The present edition is based on an extremely contemporary and relevant theme, **Reel Versus Real**. In the modern world of Facebook, Instagram, X(formerly Twitter) and so on, human beings have to constantly negotiate between the real and the reel world. We delve into the reel to forget the real and then suddenly, with a jolt, realize that a return to the real is inevitable. The theme itself has been evolved to highlight this crucial dilemma within which our existence at present is inexorably held captive.

Alongside the regular sections, we are extremely blessed to feature interactions with notable social influencers regarding their constant negotiation with the two worlds and the valued comments of a dynamic legal practitioner about the responsible use of social media platforms. The **Alumni Corner** remains the proud bearer of two well researched articles and a couple of brilliant posters by our illustrious members of the alumni. The **Amazing Facts** is a new addition that contains interesting but lesser known truths about free speech, hate speech, governmental control and the virtual world in the global scenario.

So, my friends, here's to long hours of sitting by the window, watching the monsoon showers pour over the city from over cast skies, with mobiles on our hands, as we peruse through the electronic pages of the fascinating E-Magazine rather than unmindfully browse through the realm of reels.

SAYANTANI UKIL

**SOMETIMES
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**- RACHEL
MARIE
MARTIN**

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"AS INFLUENCERS WE HAVE TO FILTER OUR WORDS": SAYAK CHAKRABORTY



Who and what inspired you to start your lifestyle vlog?

“

I am my own inspiration. When COVID happened and daily soaps completely stopped, I realized I had to do something to maintain my livelihood. That's when I started vlogging on YouTube as well as Facebook. Before that, I always wondered: "Who will watch my videos? Why would they watch them? There are already so many people creating content every day". But then I saw that, despite the large number of content creators, people were still watching my videos. That's why I'll always say that I am my own inspiration. Honestly, inspiration can only be felt from within. No one can make you feel inspired in just 2 hours, and suddenly you feel like, "Yay! I'm so motivated!" It doesn't work like that. After that, life became lethargic again, as usual. So unless you inspire or motivate yourself, there's no point.

”



As both an actor and a vlogger, much of your life is publicized. How do you manage to maintain your privacy, and what challenges do you face because of it?

“

Nothing, actually! I'm not in Bigg Boss that my whole life is publicized. I make vlogs that are only 3 to 5 minutes long. In a day, I create about 5 vlogs, so that's $5 \times 5 = 25$ minutes. In just 25 minutes, how much of my personal life can really be shown? So yes, I definitely get plenty of private time, as well as "me time," and I use that time entirely on my own terms. I don't tell others what I do in my personal time, and no one questions me about it either.

”





As someone with a large following, do you feel a responsibility to filter or frame your opinions differently?

“

See, not everything can be said everywhere or all the time. Politically speaking, I would say first of all, I'm not a politically well-informed person. I don't understand politics much. But there are certain incidents that we all can relate to, even with limited political knowledge. These are things we could say, but at the same time, can't and why? Because of political influence, our posts can get deleted. In fact, a few days ago, I posted a tribute to the army personnel who were martyred in Operation Sindoor. Facebook notified me that the post would be deleted as it violated their guidelines. I couldn't understand what I had posted that went against the rules. Later, I realized that people who didn't find the post suitable must have reported it, and that's why Facebook took it down. When your posts get deleted frequently, it affects your profile's reach, engagement, and how the algorithm treats your content. So, as influencers, we have to filter our words and content carefully. We want to say a lot, but we also have boundaries. I'm not above it all, just because I have a few followers doesn't mean I'm immune. There are higher authorities above me who can delete my post in a second. And for these reasons, I feel that Bollywood celebrities—like the three Khans, for example did not post anything related to the operation or the war. They posted nothing. Absolutely nothing. They obviously understand these things much better than we do.

”



Have you ever self-censored content because of fear of backlash, demonetization, or platform guidelines?

“

Yeah, I've definitely done that. But one thing must be noted: I'm not talking about vlogs, I've deleted many reels and write-ups because of that.

”



Do you feel public expectations on social media limit your ability to speak freely as an artist?

“

Definitely. Thinking about my followers, I have to control my words and my posts, because what I'm thinking might not be liked by others. They might report me or leave abusive comments. I might block them, but they could create another profile and do the same thing again. That's why we have to be careful and keep these things in mind—because every single person is important.

”



Sayak Chakraborty



Sayak Chakraborty is a prominent Bengali actor and YouTuber who began his career as a junior artist in 2008 and has since risen to become a familiar face in regional television and film. Best known for portraying **Lord Krishna** in the mythological series **Mahaprabhu Sri Chaitanya**, Sayak also earned acclaim for his roles in historical dramas like **Karunamoyee Rani Rashmoni** and more recently as Fidel, a vlogger, in **Chirosokha** on Star Jalsha.

Beyond television, he made his film debut with the bilingual **The Light: Swami Vivekananda (2011)**, playing the young Swami and later appeared in **Belashuru (2022)**, a family drama. Over the years, he has starred in more than 20 television serials, showcasing his versatility in various genres.

A digital creator at heart, Sayak ventured into vlogging during the lockdown, which gained him over half a million followers, and played a key part in his return to TV after a year-long hiatus in 2025. Committed to his craft, he was awarded the **“Best Emerging Actor”** at the 2021 **WOW Excellence Awards** and, in 2025, became the brand ambassador for **Texllo Technology**.



"LEGAL PRACTITIONERS MUST CREATE A MEANINGFUL IMPACT IN BUILDING PUBLIC AWARENESS..." ADV. CARDINA ROY IN AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW TO DIA- LA(W)-GUE



How does the right to free speech apply to social media platforms, which are private entities rather than government bodies?

The freedom of speech and expression is guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India to its citizens. The term "speech and expression" involves multidimensional things like free speech, free expressions, as well as hate speech, misinformation, obscenity. Private entity means the social media platforms, which have their own policies, like the First Amendment policy. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) find that certain information or content on their platform spreading hate toward a race, community, individual, or someone of a different sexual orientation, at that moment, they will be using their First Amendment policy. The First Amendment policy generally involves taking down hate speech or hateful content. The second concern is misinformation. On social media, we frequently encounter both reliable information and false information. If misinformation spreads false rumours, such as political rumours or rumours about an individual, or involves trolling related to sensitive topics, the platforms can remove such content under the same policy. The third concern is obscenity. When obscene content is made available on social media, it may negatively affect individuals, particularly the mindset of young people, and hurt the emotions, dignity, and integrity of individuals or communities. When such content is detected, the platform's management generally takes it down. Moving on to government entities, the government has its own rules, regulations, and policies regarding issues like obscenity. The Information Technology Act 2000 for example, provides many arenas where the government or the other authorities can impose restrictions on the information which is available on social media and other digital platforms. And Article 19(1)(a) is a huge concept which is enshrined in our Constitution but that is subjected to some kind of restriction which is guaranteed under Article 19(2) of the Constitution, but these restrictions are not equivalent to complete censorship, but rather apply on specific ground such as when there is a threat to national security, the sovereignty and integrity of India, or any disturbance to public order. So here, is a difference between the social media platform and the government entities. While platforms act based on internal policies like the First Amendment principle, the government operates within a constitutional framework and imposes reasonable restrictions in matters concerning the public interest.

How do you see the balance between individual rights and platform policies evolving in the digital age?

Individual Rights means the citizen already have their constitutional rights. As individuals, we already enjoy freedom of speech and expression, including through institutional platforms. However, when it comes to platform policies, I believe that as long as a comment is not spreading rumours, misinformation, or hatred, and is not targeted at any particular community, we enjoy sufficient freedom on social media platforms as well. In earlier times, when someone wanted to share information, it used to take a long time to reach others. Today, if something happens anywhere, we can post it on social media, and within minutes, thousands of people become aware of it. This allows for public criticism, awareness, and informed discourse. The social media platform has evolved, and so have we to that level, we have the tendency nowadays if something is wrong or unjust, or wrongly being done towards us, we call it out on social media. This enables thousands of people to become aware and informed, it creates public pressure on the government, ensuring that public bodies and authorities are held accountable and deterred from acting improperly.





Do you think current laws are adequate to regulate speech on social media, or is there a need for updated legislation?

This is a very ambiguous question. But the factor is, there is always a need for updated legislation. No law is absolute or final, and everything is subject to constant change. As society evolves every day, it becomes increasingly important to have laws which can regulate the freedom of speech and expression in a liberating way.

How do you think the interpretation of free speech is evolving in the digital age compared to traditional media?

Of course, it is constantly evolving. There is unprecedented access to information. Previously, if we wanted updates on current affairs, educational content, or any kind of instructional material, it took time. Now, we receive all of it within seconds and that is a huge development. And then there is a global communication for instance, you can sit in one part of the world and easily communicate with someone on another continent. Then there is freedom of expression. People today can express themselves not only through speech, but also through writing, content creation, poetry, dance, or any other creative form. Expression today is diverse and dynamic. And then the economic opportunities through the platform, like LinkedIn, and others. These platforms help us discover jobs, promote entrepreneurship, launch start-ups, and build professional networks. Economic opportunities are among the most relevant and sought-after aspects of digital platforms. So, I completely agree that freedom, as guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution has expanded significantly in the digital age. Through social media, we are not only experiencing freedom of expression, but also benefitting from global communication, instant information access, entertainment, creativity, collaboration, innovation, and meaningful economic growth.

How has social media changed the public's perception of freedom of speech in India, especially in the political and religious spheres?

Actually, the public's perception was and is always evolving, if you compare your father's views on religion or politics with your own, you'll likely notice differences. Even our parents' perceptions have evolved over time. I believe that the public's perception is ever-evolving, it is always subject to change. As individuals who enjoy the right to freedom of speech and expression, and who experience these shifting mindsets and perceptions, we have generally used social media in a positive way especially to connect with more people. As I mentioned in response to an earlier question, global communication is now a defining feature of our era. In traditional times, people were often hesitant to speak openly. But with social media, we now express ourselves publicly and instantly and everyone can see what we think, believe, or stand for. So I think the public's perception is ever evolving, and the public has changed the social media platform. Social media platform has not changed our perception.

What role do you believe advocates and legal practitioners should play in shaping policies around digital speech?

Let me tell you, shaping policies is primarily the responsibility of bureaucrats. That is their domain, not ours. But the factor is, if we feel that any existing law, or a newly introduced one, is ultra vires, unconstitutional, or violates the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression, we have every right to question it and we can always put it before appropriate legal forums, such as the High Courts or the Supreme Court of India. These courts have the power to examine the validity of such laws, and if necessary, direct the executive to act or instruct the legislature to amend or enact laws accordingly. So as an advocate or a legal practitioner, we certainly have the ability to influence the public. Our role includes being well-informed about the laws particularly those that regulate social media platforms and sharing that knowledge with the general public. Since many people are often unaware of their legal rights and duties, it becomes our responsibility to educate them. We can inform them: "These provisions already exist in our legal framework, so please respect and abide by them." By doing so, we contribute to public awareness and help prevent violations of the law. That is how we, as legal professionals, can make a meaningful impact.





Cardina Roy



Cardina Roy has been practicing as an Advocate at the Hon'ble High Court at Calcutta with a primary focus on Constitutional Law. With a deep commitment to upholding the principles enshrined in the Constitution of India, she has handled a wide range of matters concerning fundamental rights, administrative actions, and public interest litigations.

She has completed her LL.B. in 2017 and went on to pursue a specialization in Constitutional Law, earning an LL.M. in 2020. With a strong academic foundation and years of courtroom experience, she brings both scholarly insight and practical expertise to the complex legal issues she engages with.

Known for her analytical acumen and advocacy skills, she has earned respect among peers and clients alike for her dedication to justice, ethical legal practice, and constitutional values.





“CREATING CONTENT IS A QUIET OBSESSION WITH ME”



SHREYA DUTTA
(THE TRUELY BONG)



SUBSCRIBE

I am Shreya, a successful IT professional, a proud mom to a very young daughter, a single child, a responsible wife and a much publicized social media content creator. I juggle work, motherhood, and family with matured ease, love, strength, and a bit of grace every day.

I never imagined myself ever facing a camera, especially not to share my personal life for the world to witness. Growing up, I was a fairly private person, and the idea of letting strangers into my world felt uncomfortable and foreign. As time went on, I found myself increasingly drawn to lifestyle vloggers, who managed to connect with audiences in such authentic and meaningful ways. Their storytelling felt real, and somewhere along the line, it sparked a curiosity in me that I could not ignore.



That curiosity soon turned into a quiet obsession. I began diving deep into the world of content creation. I researched everything from scripting and shooting to the technical side of editing, thumbnails, and analytics. It wasn't just about talking in front of a camera; it was about crafting an experience that felt honest yet engaging. I spent hours understanding how algorithms work, and what makes content resonate with people across different platforms.

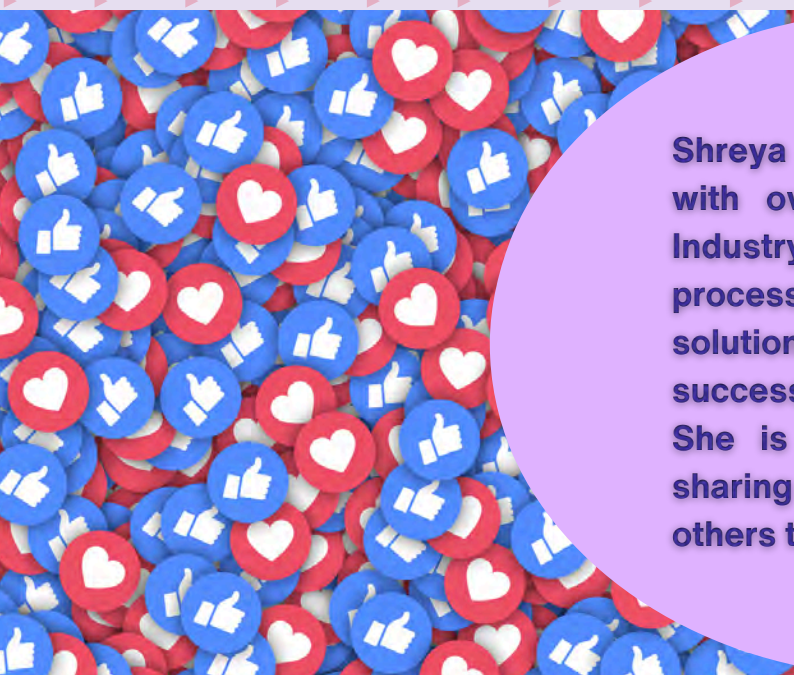
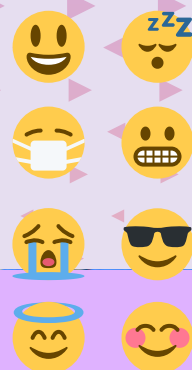
Eventually, I realized I didn't just want to be a passive viewer anymore, instead I wanted to create something of my own. It wasn't an overnight decision, but a gradual build-up of knowledge, confidence, and purpose. Sharing my personal life on camera may have once felt unimaginable, but now it feels like a powerful way to connect, relate, and hopefully inspire others who are just like me - curious, hesitant, but full of stories worth telling.



Correspondence initiative by
Sayantani Ukil

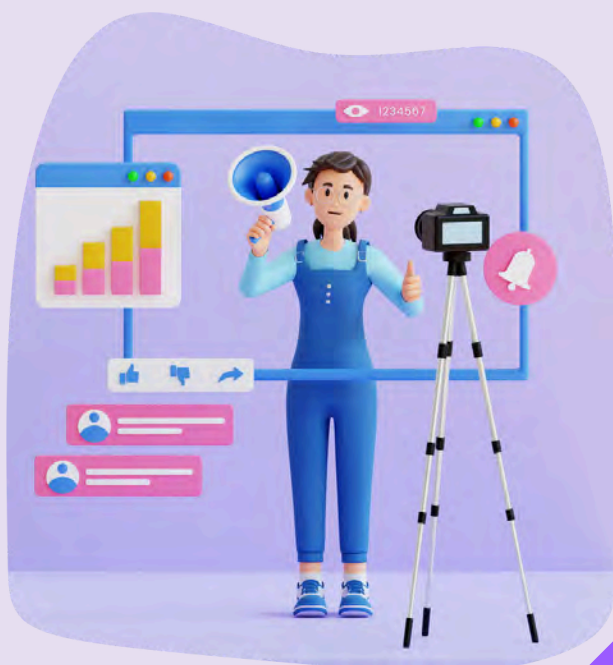


SHREYA DUTTA (THE TRUELY BONG)



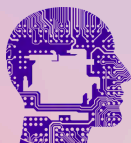
Shreya Dutta, is a Quality Assurance Analyst with over 11 years of experience in the IT Industry. She specializes in streamlining processes, and delivering high-performance solutions, ensuring excellence that drive successful business.

She is also a social media content creator, sharing her lifestyle and thereby connecting with others through relatable, real-life experiences.





SHINJINEE DASGUPTA



TECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN EXISTENCE

Arghajyoti Bagchi



"Free speech is not the right to speak without consequence; it's the burden to speak with conscience in a world that never stops listening."

Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India, secures to every citizen the freedom of speech and expression and should be read with clause (2) which provides that the said right shall not prevent the operation of a law relating to the matters specified therein.

In *Romesh Thaper v. State of Madras*, AIR 1950 SC 124, while quoting U.S. Supreme Court's view in *Lovell v. City of Griffin*, (1937) 303 U.S. 404, the Apex Court held that the freedom of speech and expression, guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a), means the right to speak and to express one's opinion by words of mouth, writing, printing, pictures or in any other manner. It is to express one's convictions and opinion or ideas freely, through any communicable medium or visible representation, such as gesture, signs and the like.

Over the past few years the public has shifted their viewership from the traditional media, comprising of newspapers and television, to the internet. The scope that the internet offers is unmatched by what traditional media provided. Social media has evolved into one of the most influential aspects of the internet, especially with the widespread use of smartphones. It has become our everyday go-to space for sharing thoughts, information, and experiences. Blending technology, connectivity, and human interaction, social media platforms allow people to express themselves through words, images, videos, and even music. At its core, it turns communication into a dynamic, two-way conversation—accessible anytime, anywhere. On social media, free speech travels faster than thought—its power lies not just in being heard, but in being held accountable by millions in real time. The idea of free speech on social media is by far one of the most debatable topic according to the statutes.

We all know that the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 controls the digital content in India. The Act's Section 69A gives the government the authority to prevent general public from accessing internet content that endangers public safety, defence, or sovereignty.

Most importantly, the cynical question that arises every now and then is whether social media verily provides the opportunity of free speech or not. From the Landmark Judgement of *Romesh Thaper v. State of Madras* we can clearly derive that an individual has right to express one's opinion through writing, printing or pictures but whenever we see any such controversial expression on social media which is nothing but the very crux of one's opinion articulated through posting of pictures, we get carried away with mixed emotions, even though such posts might look unbecoming it attracts enough to create a sense of insecurity amongst many, this is because people forget that freedom of speech is subject to reasonable restrictions in the interest of:





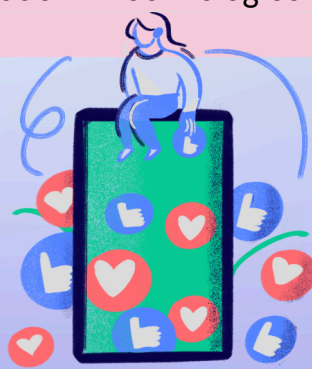
- **Sovereignty and integrity of India:** To prevent any speech that could undermine the unity and territorial integrity of the country.
- **Security of the State:** To prevent speech that could incite rebellion or violence against the government.
- **Friendly relations with foreign states:** To maintain diplomatic harmony and prevent actions that could damage relations with other countries.
- **Public order:** To maintain law and order and prevent breaches of peace.
- **Decency or morality:** To restrict obscene or indecent material and maintain public decency.
- **Contempt of court:** To prevent actions that could undermine the dignity and authority of the judiciary.
- **Defamation:** To prevent the publication of false and malicious statements that harm an individual's reputation.
- **Incitement to an offence:** To prevent speech that incites or promotes criminal activities.

No individual has the right to violate this basic principle. The term “reasonable restriction” connotes that the limitation imposed on a person in the enjoyment of his right should not be arbitrary or of an expressive nature, beyond what is actually required in the interests of the public. The word “reasonable” implies intelligent care and deliberation, that is, the choice, of a course which is dictated by reason. Social media has augmented the core of free speech by removing traditional barriers to expression. Unlike the past, individuals no longer need to speak through established platforms like newspapers—they can now share opinions directly and publicly. It empowers people to be heard by wider audiences and act as both creators and consumers of content. However, the anonymity it allows can be a double-edged sword, enabling harmful speech, copyright violations, and making accountability harder to enforce.

In the 21st century where the lives of men are uploaded on social media and their thoughts best expressed through it, it is important that measures be put in place to ensure that the incredible benefits of social media are harnessed and utilized in ways that keep the rights of men protected. After all, the crux of technology is to complement human existence and not to jeopardize it.



Arghajyoti Bagchi (Batch of 2024) is a legal professional with a deep interest in Corporate and Real Estate Law, while also working across Criminal and Cyber Law. He has completed his B.A. LL B. from Heritage Law College in the Year 2024. He is currently the Legal Associate of Francom Group of Companies, dealing in Domestic and International Real-estate, handling everything from advisory to compliance matters. Alongside his legal career he is also into casual photography and is also a tech enthusiast, combining modern technologies for better legal support.





THE POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Upayan Chakraborty



In today's digital world, social media plays a huge role in how we communicate. Platforms like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok allow billions of people to share thoughts, opinions, and news instantly. These platforms have made it easier than ever for people to express themselves freely. However, this new freedom also brings challenges. There are growing concerns about how social media affects free speech, how content is controlled, and who decides what is acceptable to say online.

This article explores both the positive and negative effects of social media on free speech and discusses what this means for individuals, governments, and society as a whole.

The Power of Social Media to Give Everyone a Voice

Before social media existed, only a few people such as politicians, celebrities, and journalists could easily share their ideas with a large audience. Today, anyone with internet access can speak to the world. This change has helped many people feel more heard and included.

Social media has helped raise awareness about important social issues. Movements like #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, and climate change activism became global because of social media. These platforms allowed people to organize protests, share personal stories, and connect with others who care about similar causes.

Social media also gives a voice to people who may be ignored or silenced by traditional media, such as minority groups, people with disabilities, or those living in less-developed countries. This has created a more diverse and open conversation in the public space, which is a big win for free speech.

Content Moderation: Who Controls What We Can Say?

Even though social media supports free expression, it also has rules. Every platform has guidelines that say what content is allowed and what is not. This is called content moderation.

Content moderation is necessary to stop dangerous or harmful posts, like hate speech, harassment, or false information. However, it also raises important questions:

- Who decides what is harmful?
- Are these decisions fair?
- Are users treated equally?

For example, sometimes social media companies remove posts or ban users for sharing political opinions. In some cases, these actions seem unfair or unclear. On the other hand, some harmful content like fake news or violent threats might be left online for too long. This can hurt people or cause real life problems.

Social media companies are private businesses, so they can set their own rules. But because they are so powerful, many people believe they should act more like public services and be more open about how they make decisions.

Algorithms and Echo Chambers

Social media platforms use algorithms to decide what content shows up in your feed. These algorithms are designed to keep users online as long as possible by showing content they are likely to engage with—especially things that are exciting, emotional, or controversial.

While this may seem helpful, it also has some downsides:





1. Amplifying extreme views: Algorithms often push shocking or dramatic content to the top, even if it's false or harmful.

2. Creating echo chambers: Many users mostly see opinions that match their own. This can limit understanding and increase division in society.

When people only hear views that they already agree with, they may become more closed-minded and unwilling to consider other perspectives. This reduces the quality of public debate and discourages respectful disagreement.

People with different or unpopular opinions may be bullied, banned, or silenced. This leads to self-censorship, where people are afraid to speak honestly online. Even though they legally have the right to speak, they stay silent because of fear of backlash or cancellation.

Government Involvement: Help or Harm?

Governments around the world are trying to regulate social media. In some cases, this is a good thing. For example, governments may want to stop the spread of misinformation during elections or protect people from cyberbullying and hate speech.

However, in other cases, government control can be dangerous. In countries like China, Iran, and North Korea, the government censors what people can say online and blocks social media sites completely. This is a serious threat to free speech.

Even in democratic countries, some laws may go too far and limit free expression. For example, Germany's laws require platforms to delete illegal content quickly, but critics say this sometimes leads to deleting posts that are not actually harmful.

Governments must find a balance: protect people from real harm without silencing important discussions or political opinions.

Business Interests and Free Speech

It's also important to understand that social media companies are businesses. Their main goal is to make money. This affects the way they deal with free speech.

- Companies may leave harmful content online if it gets lots of clicks, likes, and shares—because that means more advertising money.
- They may remove posts that make advertisers uncomfortable, even if those posts are important or true.
- Decisions about what content stays or goes may be influenced by politics or business deals.

This means that decisions about speech are not always made to protect users, but to protect profits. This weakens trust in social media and raises serious questions about fairness and transparency.

Harassment, Cancel Culture, and the Chilling Effect

Many people, especially women, minorities, journalists, and activists, face harassment on social media. They may receive threats, be bullied, or have their private information shared online (a practice known as doxxing).

This constant threat can stop people from speaking freely. When people feel unsafe, they may choose not to share their opinions at all. This is known as a chilling effect—when fear of punishment or backlash causes people to stay silent.

In addition, "cancel culture"—where people are boycotted or publicly shamed for saying something unpopular—can lead to overreaction. While it's good to hold people accountable for harmful speech, canceling someone over a mistake or disagreement can go too far and silence useful conversations. True free speech means not only having the right to speak but also feeling safe and confident enough to do so.

The Future of Free Speech on Social Media

As social media becomes even more central to our lives, the future of free speech online depends on the choices we make as a society. Some important questions need to be answered:

1. How should platforms handle harmful content while protecting free expression?





2. Can laws be made to hold companies accountable without allowing government censorship?
3. Should users have more control over what they see online and how they report harmful content?
4. Can technology—like better AI—help identify dangerous content without censoring innocent users?
5. How can we teach people to use social media responsibly and think critically about what they see online?

Solving these problems will require cooperation between social media companies, governments, experts, and everyday users. Everyone has a role to play in creating a digital space that supports both safety and freedom.

Conclusion

Social media has changed the world by giving more people the power to speak and be heard. It has helped promote human rights, spread important ideas, and connect communities across the globe. But it has also created serious challenges: the spread of misinformation, online hate, unfair censorship, and the control of speech by powerful companies.

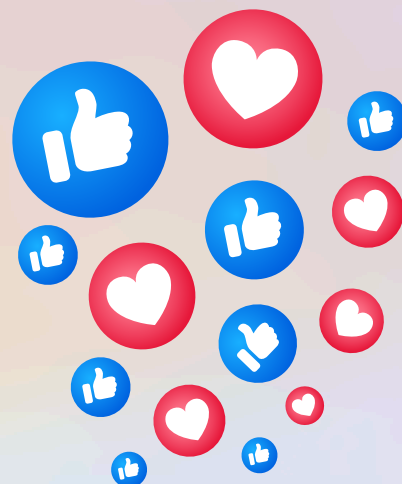
To protect free speech in the digital age, we must find the right balance between open expression and responsible communication. That means protecting people from harm without limiting their right to speak. It means holding companies accountable while also respecting different opinions. And it means building a culture where people feel safe to share, disagree, and learn from one another.

Free speech is one of our most important rights—but it comes with responsibilities. In the age of social media, we must work harder than ever to protect it.

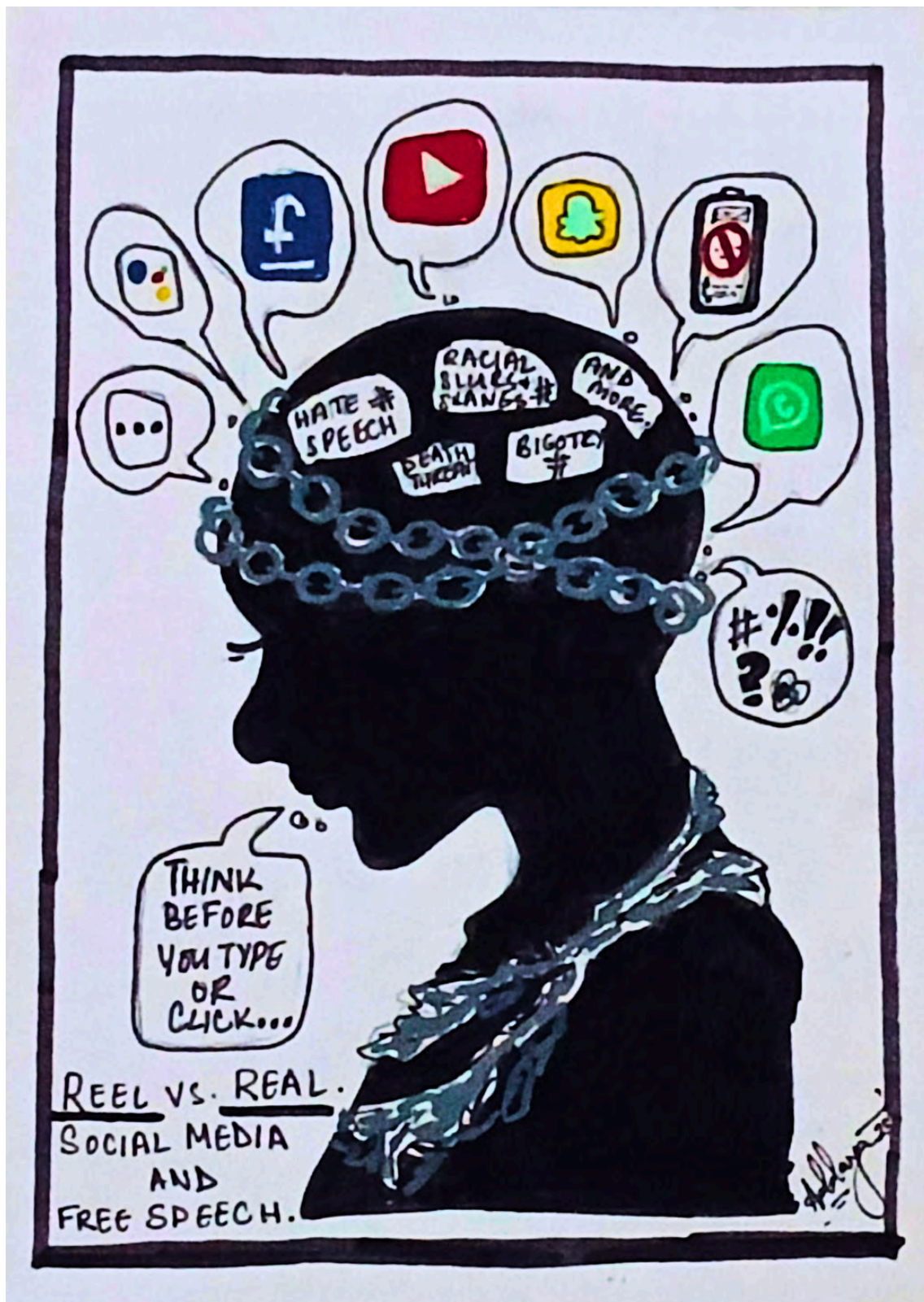


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Subhanjana Roy (Batch of 2024) is a practicing advocate and pursuing a Master of Laws (LLM) degree. During her time at the college, she developed a strong foundation in legal principles and practices. In addition to academic pursuits, she is also preparing for the judiciary examinations, demonstrating her commitment to excellence and desire to make a meaningful contribution to the legal community.



ADDAYA GHOSH

THE UNSPOKEN SCROLL: NAVIGATING SOCIAL MEDIA SILENCE

In the world that scrolls endlessly, silence can be deafening. Where headlines echo louder than facts, absence of responsible usage of media speaks volumes. In India, media is heralded as the “Fourth Estate”, an indispensable pillar meant to challenge and keep in check power, ensure transparency, and invoke thoughts. But what happens when this estate is not destroyed, but “silenced”?

“Silence” indicated here is not the one enforced with handcuffs. It seeps in subtly, through editorial judgment, commercial pressures, social responsibility, and at times, through legal constraints such as pre-censorship, gag orders, state secrecy laws, or contempt of court doctrines. The Indian Constitution promises its citizens freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a). Yet interpretation of this right is constantly restricted with competing interests of national security and judicial modesty.

Historically, India’s judicial system has been vociferous in making sure that the “Fourth Estates” is not completely gagged to silence. In *Ramesh Thapar v. State of Madras* (1950) and *K.A. Abbas v. Union of India* (1971), the Supreme Court rightly emphasized that pre-censorship should be an exception. These landmark judgments strongly asserted necessity for any limitation on freedom of speech and expression must only be based on rationality, public interest and national security, thus establishing that pre-censorship be constrained and only warranted in exceptional circumstances, letting the media thrive.

Yet in spite of such strong backing from judiciary, the media which is expected to be unbiased, has not always been the innocent party in Russian roulette. Sensationalism, and biased reportage have often undermined the integrity of news. The case of *Sahara India Real Estate Corp. Ltd. v. SEBI* (2012) stands out as a troubling example. A confidential exchange between the said parties found its way onto television screens just the night before crucial Supreme Court hearing. This breach in confidentiality jeopardized fairness of the trial.

The Supreme Court in response, introduced the idea of “postponement orders,” allowing courts to delay media reporting of cases where such reporting could impact the fairness of trials, and hence acknowledged the evil truth: Media, left unchecked, can prejudice justice just as swiftly as it can spread information.

Today, media doesn’t merely report what is important; it decides what becomes important. Seriousness of a case, weight of a tragedy, significance of war is now often dictated by its screen time. If the camera does not roll, the public does not blink. Consider the ongoing conflict in territorial borders of India and Pakistan—unfolding deaths, conspiracies against India and decisions—largely absent from our current newsfeeds. It is erasure.

This layered silence is subtler than outright censorship, more insidious than loud propaganda. And yet, it is perhaps more dangerous. Because it does not attack the truth, but willfully chooses to ignores it.

As we navigate this paradox of overexposure and omission, the real question is not whether the media has freedom or not, but whether it is still interested in freedom. When the scroll stops moving, and the screen goes dark, we must ask: who decides what deserves a voice, and who benefits when that voice is quiet?

In our hyper-connected world, “social media silence,” can speak volumes and is far from being a temporary hiatus. It often represents a complex interplay of personal choices, societal pressures, and evolving digital habits.

Reasons behind social media silence are diverse. The constant barrage of information, comparisons, and curated realities can be overwhelming, leading to anxiety, and a feeling of inadequacy. Stepping away from such digital noise allows reconnection with the present moment, fostering mindfulness and reducing the pressure to constantly perform. This deliberate disengagement can be a powerful act of self-care, prioritizing mental health over the perceived demands of online engagement.



Through years of relentless scrolling, posting, and engaging online, people might feel digitally fatigued leading to a sense of burnout. This fatigue can manifest as a gradual withdrawal or a sudden abandonment of platforms, signaling a need for rest and a recalibration of online habits. It's a recognition that digital spaces, while offering worldwide connections, can also be emotionally and cognitively draining. Furthermore, social media silence can be a consequence of life transitions and personal circumstances. Periods of intense focus, such as pursuing academic goals, embarking on new career paths, or navigating through personal challenges, might necessitate a temporary or permanent retreat from the distractions of constant updates and interactions of social media.

Fear of online scrutiny and judgment also plays a significant role in the decision to remain silent in media platforms. Individuals who have experienced negative online interactions, misinterpretation, cyberbullying, public shaming or anxiety therefrom, might choose to withdraw, as a form of self-preservation, leading to cautious and ultimately silent digital footprints.

Interpretation of social media silence is equally multifaceted and often depends on the context and observer's relationship with the silent individual. For close friends and family, a sudden absence might trigger concern and worry. Conversely, for more distant acquaintances or casual followers, social media silence might go unnoticed. In the vast ocean of online profiles, lack of updates can be interpreted as a sign of distress or isolation underscoring the ephemeral nature of many digital connections. In professional contexts, social media silence may carry various implications. For individuals who rely on online platforms for networking, self-promotion, or business development, prolonged absence might be perceived as lack of engagement or a decline in activity, causing potential harm to their professional opportunities. However, for others, particularly those in fields where privacy and discretion are valued, limited or non-existent social media presence might be seen as a sign of professionalism and focus.

The rise of "lurkers" – individuals who consume social media content without actively participating – further complicates the interpretation of silence. Their silence doesn't necessarily indicate disengagement but rather a preference for passive observation. Furthermore, the evolving platforms of social media itself influence our perception of silence. Proliferation of new platforms and shifting trends in online communication may mean that individuals might migrate their online activity by choosing different modes of digital interaction.

Decreased activity on one platform might coincide with increased engagement on another, or a shift towards more private forms of communication.

Ultimately, social media silence is a nuanced phenomenon that defies simple categorization. It can be a conscious act of rebellion against pressures of online life, a necessary retreat for personal well-being, a consequence of life's demands, or simply a preference for less public digital existence. Understanding the multifaceted reasons and interpretations of this silence requires empathy, observation, and a prenotion that the absence of digital noise can be just as evocative as the constant hum of online activity. It compels us to look beyond the surface of online profiles and consider the complex realities of individual lives.

The pervasive nature of social media has ingrained in us certain expectations of digital presence. Yet, to view social media silence solely through the lens of absence or disengagement would mean to overlook its true potential and the diverse motivations that underpin it. Deliberate or circumstantial withdrawal from digital cacophony can be a powerful form of communication in itself, carrying profound message about individual priorities, commitment to mental well-being, heightened self-awareness, and evolving relationship between humans and technology. It signifies a proactive effort to reduce anxiety-inducing comparisons, and foster a greater sense of presence in the offline real world, where life's most meaningful moments unfold beyond the confines of a digital screen. This deliberate quietude can be a testament to cultivate a healthier relationship with technology. The silence can also eloquently communicate a redirection of energy.

Moreover, social media silence can serve as a protective barrier against the potential harms of online interaction. Digital withdrawal after experiencing online harassment, or pervasive negativity, speaks volumes about the earnest need for safer and more respectful online environments and highlights the emotional toll that negative online experiences can take. The quietude, in this context, is a powerful testament to the endeavour of individuals seeking to safeguard their emotional and psychological well-being.



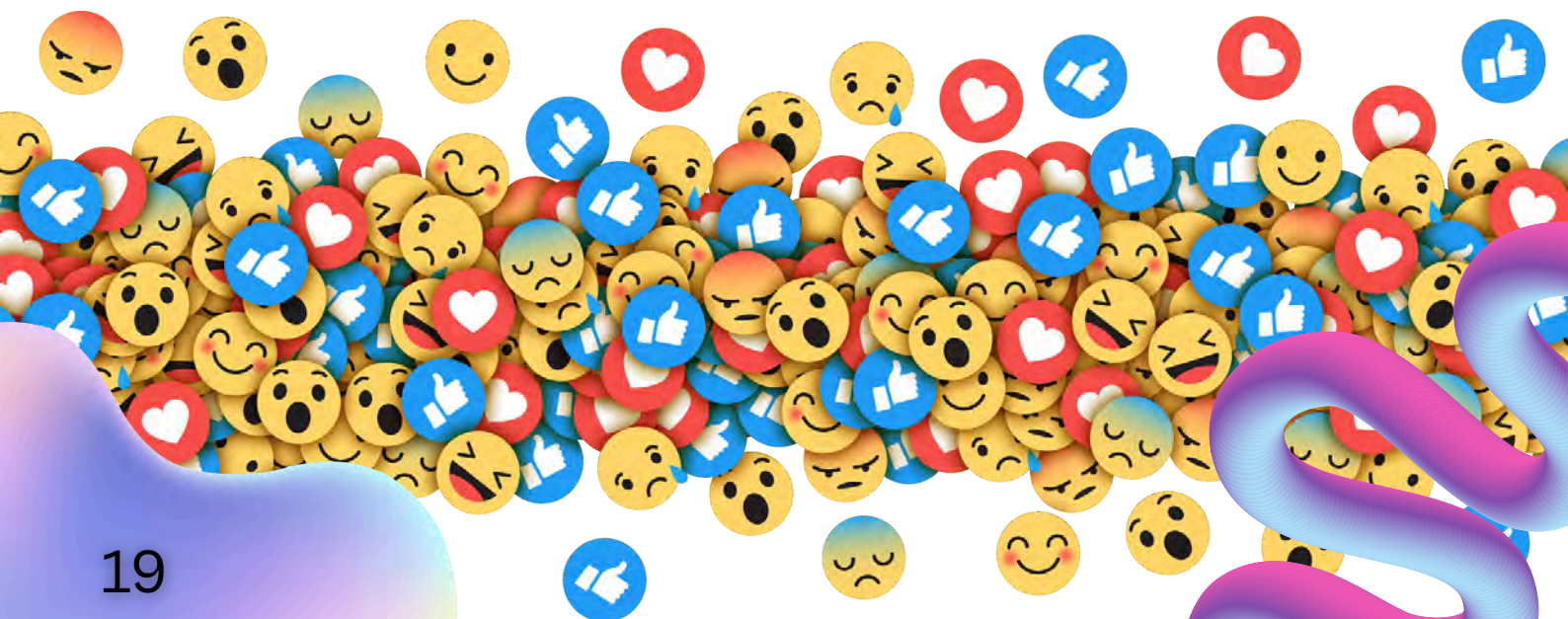


With Increasing awareness of privacy erosion and data exploitation, social media silence is further imbued with a significant meaning. In an era where personal data is a valued commodity and concerns about online surveillance are growing, choosing to limit or eliminate one's digital footprint can be a profound statement reinstating the desire for privacy.

The Interpretation of social media silence also compels us to reconsider our reliance on digital platforms as the primary means of understanding lives of one another. Media silence can serve as a reminder to the fact that our understanding of others should not be solely predicated on their online presence and that deeper connections require more than just digital updates as true connection and meaningful engagement often occur beyond the digital realm, in face-to-face interactions and shared experiences.

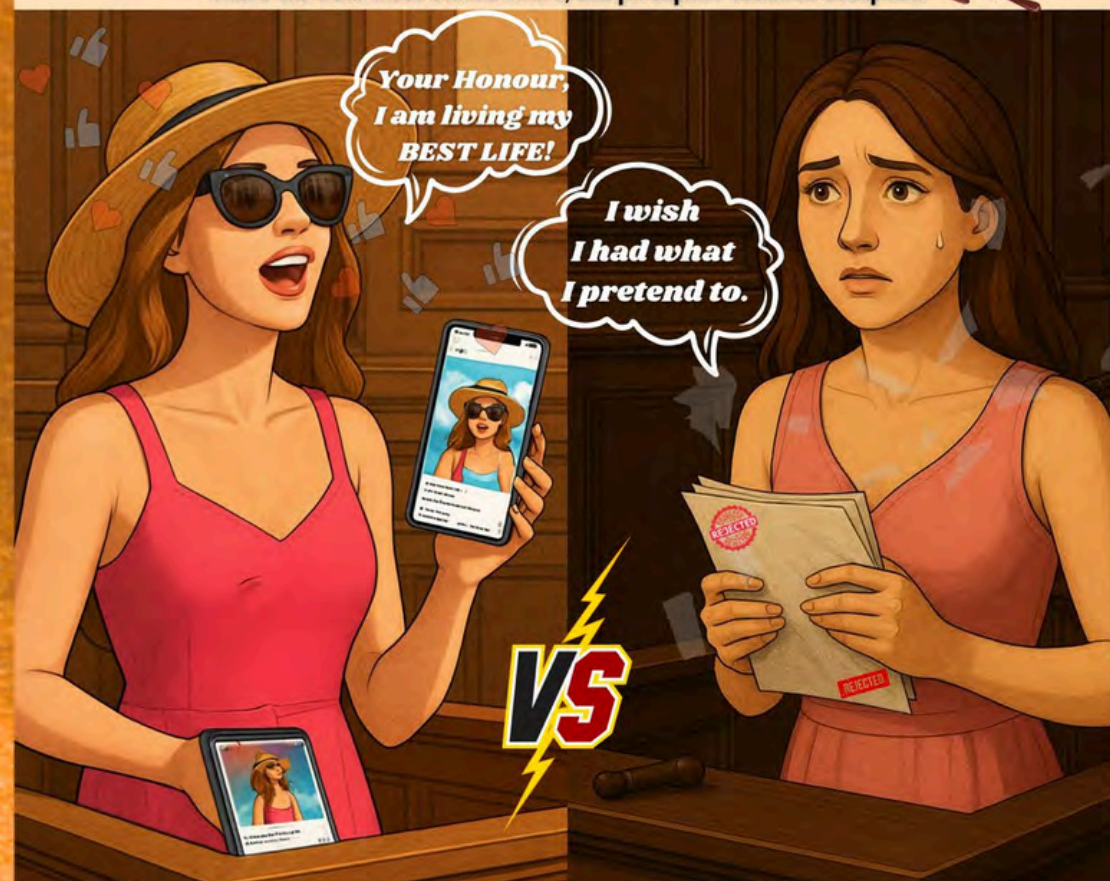
In conclusion, social media silence, far from being a void, is often a rich and nuanced form of communication. It speaks of individual autonomy, commitment to mental well-being, redirection of priorities, need for protection, and growing awareness of privacy concerns. It challenges our assumptions about digital presence and compels us to look beyond the surface of online activity to understand the complex realities of individual lives. The eloquent absence of digital noise can be a powerful reminder to true connections, meaningful experiences, and genuine well-being which frequently reside beyond the constant scroll and curated realities of the social media arena. It encourages more thoughtful and empathetic understanding of our digital neighbors, recognizing that sometimes, the most profound messages are conveyed not through what is shared, but through the conscious and meaningful choice of silence.

Anushka Saha
and
Debabrati Roy Chowdhury



Reel vs Real: A Case of Misrepresentation

Where the truth hides behind filters, and perception becomes deception.



BNS punishes the deceiver—unless the lie is to oneself.

—Shinjinee Dasgupta

SHINJINEE DASGUPTA



FREEDOM OF SPEECH AROUND THE WORLD



Free speech (or freedom of speech) is the right to express your opinions, ideas, and beliefs without government censorship or punishment. In simple words it means that people can say what they think about politics, society, religion, etc. without fear of arrest, censorship, or punishment by the state, as long as it doesn't break specific laws.

Freedom of speech is a cornerstone of democratic societies, but its scope and limitations vary significantly across the globe. While many nations enshrine this right in their constitutions or legal frameworks, the extent to which individuals can express themselves freely often depends on cultural, political, and legal contexts.

Different countries around the globe have varying laws and approaches to support freedom of speech, reflecting their political systems and cultural values. Countries like United States, United Kingdom, India, Russia, China, Japan, France, Germany etc. has systematically supported free speech according to their political landscape and cultural framework.

In the United States, free speech is strongly protected under the First Amendment, allowing broad expression, even if it is controversial. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (1791) broadly prohibits Congress (and by incorporation, the states) from "abridging freedom of speech". In practice this protects nearly all political and personal expression, with narrow exceptions. The U.S. has no general hate speech law – even virulent ideology is protected unless it directly incites violence. Online speech is largely shielded by 47 U.S.C. Sec. 230(c)(1), which says platforms "shall not be treated as the publisher or speaker" of user content. Key statutory limits include criminal libel (rare), copyright, and antiterrorism laws. Recent years have seen controversy over social media: for example, some state laws requiring platforms to carry all content were struck down (viewpoint discrimination), and bills have been introduced in Congress to amend Sec. 230 (though none have been passed). The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was on civil rights statutes (e.g. civil rights law), criminal laws (e.g. 18 U.S.C. Sec. 373 on supporting terrorism, laws against incitement). It was not federal hate-speech ban, only civil liability for harassment or defamation.

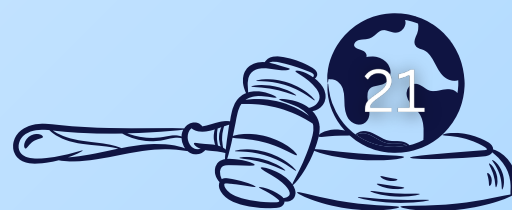
Even United States. is a progressive country though it has some limitations. The U.S. Supreme Court cases (e.g. *Brandenburg v. Ohio* 1969) set a high bar: speech is unprotected only if it is directed to inciting imminent lawless action and likely to produce it. Libel of public officials is barred unless "actual malice" (*NY Times Co. v. Sullivan*). Other unprotected categories include child pornography, true threats, perjury and fraudulent speech.

Debates over "de platforming" and Section 230 have roiled 2021–2023: the DOJ and Congress held hearings on social media moderation, and states like Florida and Texas passed laws limiting moderation (which was struck down as unconstitutional). Courts (e.g. *NetChoice v. Paxton* 2023) have begun delineating the boundary between private moderation and state compulsion.

The UK has no single written constitution, but the Human Rights Act 1998 incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights into domestic law. Article 10 of the ECHR (as applied in the UK) guarantees freedom of expression, subject to a long list of limitations that are "necessary in a democratic society". In practice, UK speech is regulated by statute: for example, the Malicious Communications Act 1988 and Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 criminalize sending "grossly offensive" or threatening electronic messages; the Public Order Act 1986 bans incitement to racial or religious hatred; and the Terrorism Act 2006 forbids dissemination of terrorist propaganda. Defamation law was reformed by the Defamation Act 2013 (raising the "serious harm" threshold). Historically, the 1881 Press Law is a key as it abolished prior censorship and protected "délits d'opinion," which means "opinion offenses" or "crimes of opinion" in French; though it still criminalizes insult and defamation. In practice, UK free speech is broad but more constrained than in the U.S. (e.g. "hate speech" laws are enforced).

As the United Kingdom does not have written constitution, therefore there is no written free-speech clause, but rights are protected by European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) Article 10 via the Human Rights Act. Statutory limits include: Malicious Communications Act 1988; Communications Act 2003 (S.127); Public Order Act 1986 (racial/religious hatred); Terrorism Act 2006; various Public Order and defamation statutes. Privacy and anti-terrorism laws also restrict speech in certain contexts.

Its limitation is that criminal penalties exist for hate speech, incitement, harassment, national security offences, and defamation. For example, Section 5 of the Public Order Act outlaws "insulting" words or behavior likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress; contempt of court laws can limit reporting. Defamation suits (civil or rare criminal) can remove speech deemed defamatory. Notably, hate speech (e.g. incitement to religious hatred) is criminal, unlike in the U.S.



The UK has debated online regulation heavily. An Online Safety Act was passed in 2023, imposing new duties on social media companies to remove illegal/harmful content. Government proposals to reform or repeal the Human Rights Act (post-Brexit “Bill of Rights” plans) have also been floated. During the COVID-19 pandemic, authorities investigated “misinformation” on social media, but no new speech crimes were enacted.

The Basic Law in Germany (Grundgesetz) Article 5 guarantees freedom of expression and press, forbidding any form of censorship. However, Article 5(2) explicitly limits this right via “general laws” that protect personal honor, youth, and moral values. In particular, German criminal law penalizes hate speech and extremist symbols: Volksverhetzung [Sec. 130 StGB {criminal Code of Germany}] outlaws incitement to hatred against protected groups and forbids Holocaust denial, and the Nazi Symbols law (Sec. 86a StGB) bans “use of symbols” of unconstitutional organizations. Defamation (Beleidigung, Üble Nachrede) and other speech-related crimes (Sec. 185–187) remain on the books. On the internet, the Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG, 2017) requires platforms to remove “obviously unlawful” hate or harassing content within twenty four hours.

In Grundgesetz Article 5 provide that “Everyone has the right freely to express and disseminate his opinion in speech, writing, and pictures” (including press freedom and academic freedom). This right “finds its limits in the provisions of general laws” (e.g. laws protecting honor or public security).

In Germany Hate-Speech laws (Sec. 130 StGB), which prohibit Holocaust denial and Nazi advocacy, are strictly enforced. Insult and defamation laws protect individuals (public figures have higher truth thresholds). There is no formal “hate speech exception” in Article 5; rather, any restriction must conform to a general law and a legitimate public interest. Recent legislation (in line with the EU Digital Services Act) has increased platform liability and content moderation, but no new constitutional amendment has occurred.

Germany was one of the first to regulate online platforms via NetzDG. In 2022–2024, German courts and regulators have continued to enforce hate-speech prohibitions online; for example, mirror sites of Russian state media were blocked under EU sanctions. Debates on disinformation have led to proposals for more transparency in social networks (e.g. laws against manipulative bots).

In other hand China’s Constitution nominally guarantees “freedom of speech” (Article 35) and press. In practice, all media and significant expression are tightly controlled by the Communist Party. Broad laws criminalize dissent: for example, vague provisions against “rumor-mongering” or “picking quarrels” (Criminal Law Art.246) carry up to several years in prison for online statements deemed false or disruptive. The law of state secrets and national security (including anti-sub-version and anti-terror statutes) is used to jail bloggers, activists and journalists who criticize the government. New criminal code amendments in 2020–2021 even made it a crime to “insult or slander” national heroes or martyrs.



Article 35 of the People’s Republic of China’s Constitution theoretically grants citizens freedom of speech and press. However, Article 51 explicitly states that these freedoms may not be used to harm the “interests of the state” or “social order.” There is no independent judiciary to enforce constitutional rights. Subversion laws (e.g. Articles 102–105 of the Criminal Code) punish “picking quarrels,” “rumor-mongering” and “inciting subversion” with heavy sentences. Defamation is criminalized: spreading “online rumors” (false information) can carry up to 3 years in prison. The 2015 Criminal Code revision added penalties for “spreading rumors on social media” (up to 7 years) and “insulting heroes and martyrs” (up to 3 years). The cyber security and counter-terrorism laws also impose content censorship duties.

Since 2020, China has intensified control of speech. The Hong Kong National Security Law (2020) effectively ended press freedom there. During the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2022 “Zero-COVID” protests, authorities ordered tough punishment for those spreading “rumors” or “discrediting” the government. In 2022, Chinese courts also endorsed “crackdown guidelines” calling for harsh penalties on anyone undermining party authority.

India’s Constitution expressly guarantees freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a). However, Article 19(2) allows the state to impose “reasonable restrictions” on this right in the interests of security of the state, public order, decency or morality, or for contempt, defamation, or incitement to offence. In practice, a wide range of laws restrict speech: these include criminal defamation (IPC Sec. 499–500), sedition (IPC Sec.124A), hate-speech laws (IPC Sec. 153A, 295A on religious offence), and statutes like the Official Secrets Act. Internet speech was once restricted by IT Act Sec. 66A (indecent online posts), but the Supreme Court struck this down in Shreya Singhal v. UOI (2015) for being unconstitutionally vague.

The most important provision of free speech in Indian Constitution is Article 19. Article 19(1)(a) provides “the right to freedom of speech and expression”. Article 19(2) lists exceptions permitting laws on national security, public order, defamation, obscenity, etc. There is no separate media freedom act; regulatory bodies (e.g. Press Council) are self-regulatory. Sedition (IPC Sec.124A, with up to life imprisonment) criminalizes comments “bringing into hatred or contempt” the government. Defamation (civil and criminal) is punished, though recent law proposals seek to eliminate jail for defamation.





Hate speech laws (153A, 295A IPC) target communal incitement. During the COVID-19 crisis, the government also used Disaster Management and police powers to block misinformation online. Internet shutdowns (e.g. in Kashmir and during protests) are legally permitted under telecommunication rules, though challenged in court.

In May 2022 the Supreme Court effectively stayed enforcement of the colonial-era sedition law, remarking it is “not in tune with the current social milieu”. Many politicians and activists had been charged under it. In October 2022, India’s apex court formally asked a larger bench to reconsider sedition’s constitutionality. In late 2022 the Court also moved to curb defamation: it ruled that criminal defamation should carry only fines (no jail). The IT Act is being updated (2021 rules requiring intermediaries to police content), and personal data/online information bills are in discussion.

The Russian Constitution (1993) formally guarantees freedom of speech and bans censorship, but adds that these freedoms cannot be used to undermine the Constitutional order or incite social discord. In practice, the state tightly controls speech. Broad “extremism” laws (e.g. Criminal Code §280–282) are used to punish dissent. In 2012, Russia adopted a “foreign agents” law requiring NGOs and media receiving foreign funds to register and label themselves, chilling independent media. Internet laws (e.g. requiring data localization and granting the state access to all communications, SORM) further erode privacy and expression.

Article 29 of the Constitution of Russia ostensibly protects speech (and bans censorship), but allows restrictions on things like war propaganda and hate. Russian courts (and the state security apparatus) routinely interpret “extremism” and public order laws to suppress dissent. Hate speech per se has limited enforcement; ironically, Russian law bans “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations” to minors and has used “extremism” charges against minority religious groups. Criminal defamation was repealed (2011), but insult laws remain. In 2022, the government passed draconian “war censorship” laws criminalizing any criticism of Russia’s actions in Ukraine: calling the invasion a “war” or spreading “fake news” about the military can bring up to 15 years in prison.

Since February 2022, Russia’s crackdown on free expression has intensified: dozens of independent outlets have been banned or forced to emigrate, tens of thousands of protesters arrested, and new legislation outlaws “discrediting” or “denigrating” the armed forces. In 2023 the arrest of Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich on espionage charges underscored the peril for journalists. Many online platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram) have been blocked domestically.

The postwar Constitution in Japan (1947) guarantees that “freedom of assembly and association as well as speech, press and all other forms of expression are guaranteed. No censorship shall be maintained”. This has created one of Asia’s most liberal environments for media and speech. Japanese law does criminalize certain speech acts: for example, criminal libel (penal code §230) and insult can be punished. But prosecutions are rare, and truth is a defense in defamation.

Article 21 of the Constitution explicitly protects speech and forbids state censorship. There is no official “gag law,” and political speech (even harsh criticism of officials) is largely free. Japan has no explicit statutory hate-speech ban (the constitution forbids discrimination, but not speech per se). In 2016, Japan enacted a “Hate Speech Elimination Act” which condemns publicly humiliating “non-Japanese” but imposes no penalties. (Some local governments, like Kawasaki City, have since passed bylaws fining hate demonstrators.) Other limits include the obscenity law (Art.175 Penal Code) outlawing child pornography and extreme pornography. State security laws forbid divulging military secrets, and defamation remains in the penal code (though largely a civil matter).

Japanese free speech law has been largely unchanged recently. The 2016 Hate Speech Act raised awareness but did not strengthen enforcement. Online, courts have applied civil liability: e.g. in 2020 a man was ordered to pay ~¥1.3M for racially harassing a Korean resident online. Social media companies have self-regulatory policies, but there is no major new legislation on content.

France’s free speech tradition rests on the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man (“freedom of communication of ideas and opinions”) and on the 1958 Constitution’s preamble. The Loi sur la liberté de la presse (Law on the Freedom of the Press) of 1881 abolished prior censorship, but it also contains many substantive restrictions. Under the 1881 Press Law, defamation and insults (Articles 29–33) are criminal offenses subject to fine and/or prison. Incitement to discrimination or hatred is also penalized: Article 24 punishes public incitement to hate or violence against groups, and Article 24bis (added later) criminalizes denial of crimes against humanity (e.g. Holocaust denial). French law also prohibits apology of terrorism (Penal Code Art. 421-2-5) and insults toward public officials or the President under the 1881 Law.

Free expression is a constitutional principle, but is balanced by laws protecting individuals and public order. The 1881 Press Law, still in force (as amended), lays out penalties for press offenses. The Conseil d’État and Constitutional Council have occasionally struck down overly vague restrictions, but generally uphold limits on speech that incites hatred or slander.



Hate speech is explicitly criminalized: racially or religiously defamatory remarks, Holocaust denial and incitement to racism are prohibited. Defamation remains a crime (not just civil) under Article 29 of the Press Law. “Insult” (injure) is a lesser offense. Other limits include state secrets laws, and a strong libel law that makes it easier for the government or individuals to sue critics. France also bans face coverings in public (2010 law) and headscarves in schools (2004), which affect public expression of religion.

France has passed various “digital” speech laws. A 2018 law allows courts to quickly remove online “massively disseminated” election disinformation. A 2020 “Avia Law” aimed to force platforms to remove hate speech within 24 hours, though large parts were struck down as unconstitutional. In 2023, France enacted an “anti-separatism” law targeting extremist ideology, which has been criticized for chilling dissent (it tightened speech on gender and national identity). There has also been debate over police live-streaming and a Global Security Act (2021) restricting filming of officers.

Australia has no explicit constitutional guarantee of free speech. Instead, since *Australian Capital Television v. Commonwealth* (1992) and *Lange v. Australian Broadcasting Corp.* (1997), the High Court has recognized an implied freedom of political communication necessary for democracy. This is a narrow doctrine: it protects political debate and electoral discussion, but not private or commercial speech per se.

The Constitution contains no bill of rights for speech. The implied freedom derived by courts prevents laws from unduly burdening political communication. However, it is not an individual “right” but a restraint on governmental power, and the Commonwealth may still regulate speech in other areas (e.g. advertising, defamation).

Australia has robust defamation laws in each state and territory, which protect reputation over free rhetoric (media outlets often settle defamation suits to avoid jail). Hate speech is partially regulated: the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (s.18C) forbids public acts likely to “offend, insult or humiliate” on the basis of race; *Attorney-General (Vic.) v. Kordowski* (2018) upheld its validity. There are other laws that forbid ‘sedition’ and unwarranted insult to religion. National security laws criminalize inciting violence against public figures. The Racial Vilification laws (in some states) and “no hate speech” internet policies also limit speech.

Australia’s Online Safety Act 2021 created an e-Safety Commissioner with powers to remove cyber bullying and harmful online content, reflecting a tilt toward moderated speech online. Governments have debated foreign influence transparency laws (the “Foreign Agents” law) and defamation reform. The push/pull of free speech continues in controversies like the Safe Schools program debate and social media regulation.

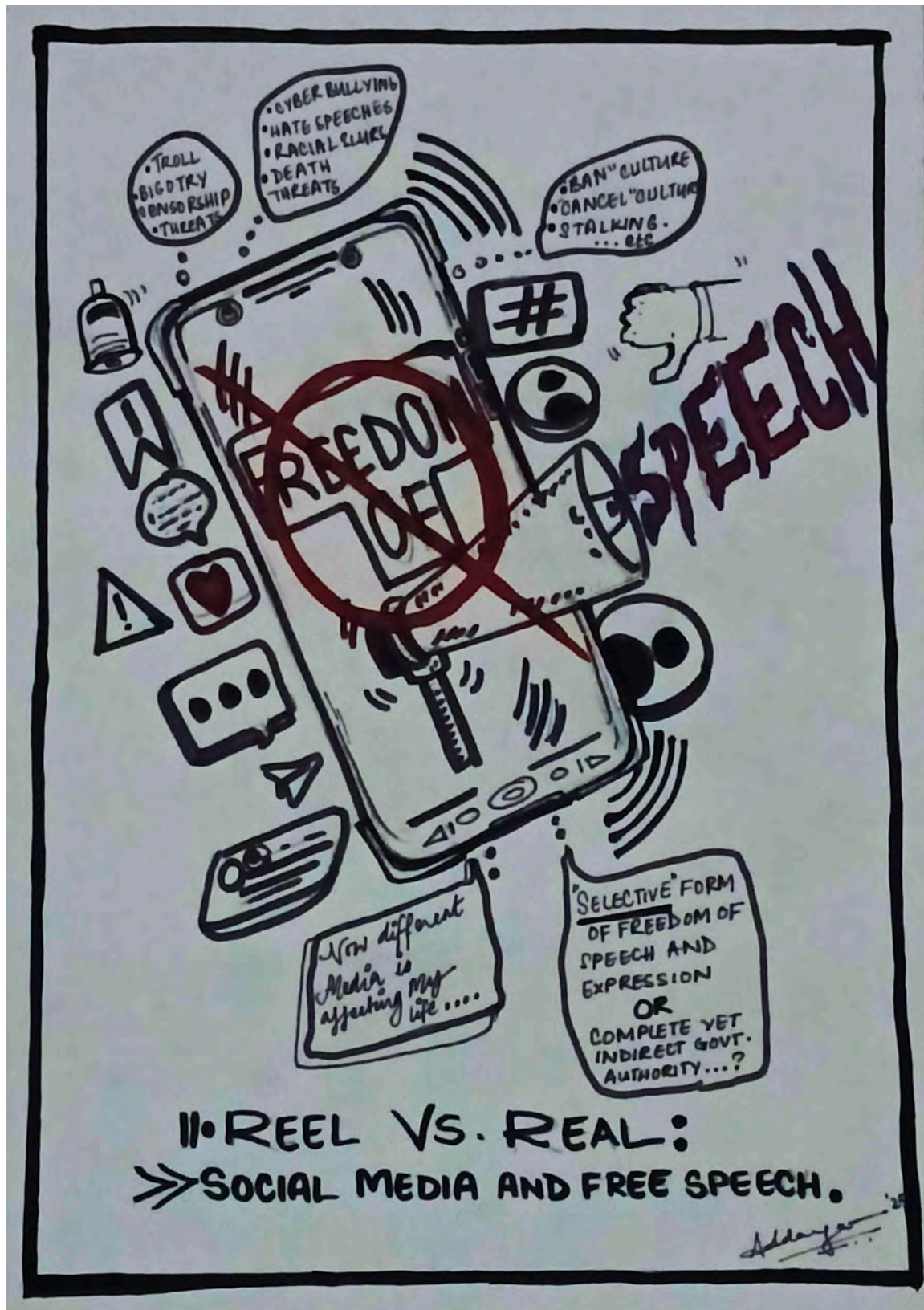


Freedom of speech is widely recognized as a fundamental human right and is essential for the functioning of any democratic society. It allows individuals to express their thoughts, share ideas, and participate in public debates. However, this right is not absolute and comes with certain limitations. Most countries impose restrictions on speech to prevent harm, such as hate speech, incitement to violence, defamation, or threats. These restrictions are meant to protect individuals and communities from discrimination, slander, and danger. Additionally, speech may be limited to safeguard national security, maintain public order, and preserve the dignity and rights of others. For example, spreading false information during a crisis or promoting terrorist propaganda can be punishable. Courts and governments strive to balance free expression with the need for social responsibility. These legal boundaries ensure that freedom of speech does not become a tool for harm but continues to support open, respectful, and safe communication within society.

To conclude, freedom of speech is a fundamental right recognized by many countries around the world, but its interpretation and enforcement vary widely depending on each nation's political landscape and cultural framework. While democratic nations like the United States and India offer broad protection for expression, others such as China and Russia impose strict limitations, often suppressing dissent and controlling public discourse. Importantly, freedom of speech is not absolute in any country. Most legal systems place reasonable restrictions to balance this right with other critical concerns such as national security, public order and protection against hate speech or defamation. This delicate balance reflects the ongoing global challenge of ensuring open expression while maintaining societal harmony and responsibility.

Dhrubjoty Dawn





ADDAYA GHOSH



HATE SPEECH VERSUS FREE SPEECH: THE ONLINE DEBATE AND DILEMMA

The rapid rise of social media has revolutionized communication, enabling individuals to express themselves freely on a global scale. However, this unprecedented access to free speech has also led to the proliferation of hate speech, creating a complex debate about where the line should be drawn between protecting freedom of expression and preventing harmful rhetoric. As social media platforms struggle to balance these competing interests, legal frameworks, ethical considerations, and the responsibilities of tech companies come under scrutiny.

Understanding Free Speech

Free speech is a cornerstone of democratic societies, enshrined in documents like the First Amendment to the United States Constitution and Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It grants individuals the right to express opinions without government censorship. Free speech fosters open debate, innovation, and societal progress, enabling marginalized voices to be heard and holding those in power accountable.

However, free speech is not absolute. Most democratic countries recognize certain limitations, such as restrictions on incitement to violence, defamation, and threats to national security. The challenge lies in defining the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable speech, especially in the unregulated realm of social media.

Defining Hate Speech

Hate speech lacks a universal legal definition, but it generally refers to speech that incites violence, hatred, or discrimination against individuals or groups based on race, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or other protected characteristics. According to the United Nations, hate speech encompasses "any kind of communication that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group." The definition of hate speech varies across jurisdictions, and what one country considers hate speech may be protected speech in another. For example, European countries tend to have stricter hate speech laws than the United States. Germany, for instance, enforces strong measures against Nazi-related speech and Holocaust denial, considering them threats to social harmony. In contrast, the U.S. legal system largely protects even offensive speech unless it directly incites harm or violence.

Hate speech can take various forms on social media, including racist slurs, misogynistic comments, religious intolerance, and xenophobic propaganda. It has been linked to real-world violence, as seen in incidents like the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar, where Facebook was used to spread anti-Muslim rhetoric that fueled persecution.

The Role of Social Media

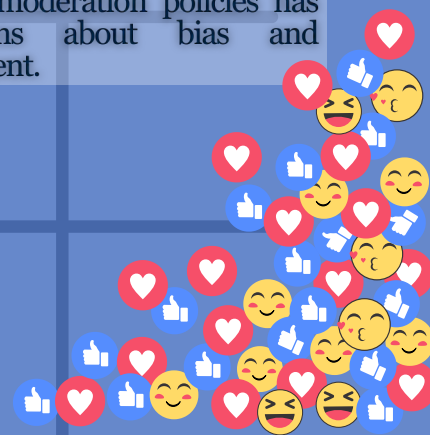
Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, and TikTok have become the primary venues for public discourse. These platforms allow billions of users to share opinions instantly, making them powerful tools for activism, education, and networking. However, they have also become spaces where hate speech spreads rapidly, often leading to real-world consequences.

Many social media companies have developed content moderation policies to combat hate speech. Platforms use algorithms, artificial intelligence, and human moderators to detect and remove content that violates community guidelines. However, enforcement is often inconsistent, and accusations of bias frequently arise.

The Free Speech vs. Hate Speech Debate

The debate over free speech and hate speech on social media is complex and multifaceted. On one hand, free speech advocates argue that restricting content sets a dangerous precedent and could lead to broader censorship and suppressing controversial but legitimate opinions. They believe that the best way to counter hate speech is through open debate rather than suppression.

On the other hand, critics argue that unchecked hate speech can fuel discrimination, harassment, and even violence. They contend that social media platforms are not doing enough to prevent the spread of harmful content. They believe that social media companies have a responsibility to create safe online environments and should take stronger actions against harmful rhetoric. The lack of transparency in content moderation policies has further fueled concerns about bias and inconsistency in enforcement.





Several high-profile cases highlight this conflict. For example, the removal of former U.S. President Donald Trump from Twitter and Facebook in 2021 sparked intense debate. Supporters of the ban argued that his posts incited violence, particularly regarding the January 6 Capitol riot. Critics, however, claimed that banning a political figure set a dangerous precedent for censorship.

Similarly, controversies have arisen around discussions on topics like gender identity, religious beliefs, and racial issues. Some users feel their views are unfairly silenced, while others believe that social media platforms do not take sufficient measures to curb hate speech.

The Dilemma: Where Should the Line Be Drawn?

The conflict between free speech and hate speech on social media raises crucial ethical and practical questions:

1. Who decides what constitutes hate speech? Social media companies, governments, and civil society groups often disagree on what qualifies as hate speech, leading to inconsistent enforcement.
2. Does restricting hate speech infringe on free expression? Critics argue that excessive moderation leads to the suppression of political and social debates, creating echo chambers rather than promoting open discussion.
3. How can moderation be fair and unbiased? Accusations of bias in content moderation policies have led to public distrust. Some believe that social media platforms disproportionately target certain political ideologies or cultural perspectives.
4. What role should governments play? While state intervention can prevent harm, excessive regulation risks turning into censorship and violating fundamental rights.

Legal Perspectives on Hate Speech and Free Speech

Different countries have different approaches to regulating hate speech and free speech.

United States: In the U.S., the First Amendment strongly protects free speech, including speech that may be offensive or hateful, unless it incites violence or constitutes a direct threat. One of the most influential cases regarding the limits of free speech is *Brandenburg v. Ohio*, 395 U.S. 444 (1969). The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that speech advocating illegal activities is protected under the First Amendment unless it incites imminent lawless action. This "Brandenburg test" continues to influence social media cases, as courts determine whether online speech is protected or constitutes illegal incitement.

For instance, in *Elonis v. United States* (2015), 575 U.S. 723, the Supreme Court overturned the conviction of a man who posted violent threats on Facebook, ruling that prosecutors must prove intent to threaten rather than just relying on how a reasonable person perceives the speech. This case set a high bar for criminalizing online hate speech in the U.S.

Europe: In contrast to the U.S., European countries impose more restrictions on hate speech. The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has upheld limitations on speech that incites hatred or violence, even if it does not meet the "imminent lawless action" standard used in the U.S. In *Delfi AS v. Estonia*, App. No. 64569/09, the ECtHR held that an online news portal was liable for failing to remove hate speech comments posted by users. The ruling emphasized that websites and platforms could bear responsibility for user-generated content if they do not take adequate steps to prevent hate speech.

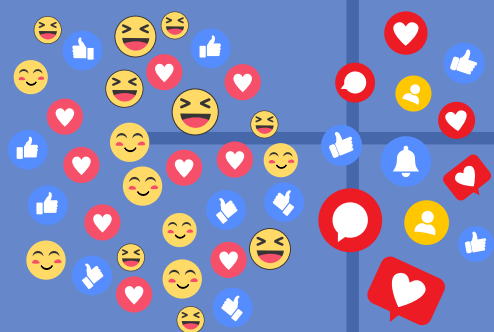
In *E.S. v. Austria*, App. No. 38450/12, the ECtHR upheld the conviction of a woman who made derogatory remarks about the Prophet Muhammad. The court ruled that her comments went beyond free expression and amounted to religious insult, justifying Austria's restrictions to protect religious peace.

These cases illustrate how European courts are more willing to limit speech on social media to protect societal harmony and prevent discrimination.

India: India's approach to hate speech on social media involves a delicate balance between its constitutional guarantee of free speech (Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution) and reasonable restrictions (Article 19(2)). Courts in India have upheld limitations on speech that affects public order, morality, and national security.

In *Shreya Singhal v. Union of India*, (2015) 5 SCC 1, the Supreme Court of India struck down Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, which criminalized online speech deemed "offensive" or "annoying." The court ruled that the law was vague and overly broad, leading to a chilling effect on free speech. This landmark judgment reaffirmed the importance of protecting online expression while recognizing that certain restrictions are necessary.





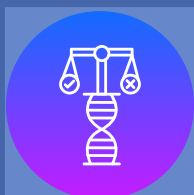
In *Amish Devgan v. Union of India* (2020) (AIR 2021 SC 4155), Journalist Amish Devgan was accused of hate speech for making derogatory remarks against a Sufi saint. The Supreme Court observed that while free speech is crucial, speech that promotes enmity between religious communities is not protected. The Court applied the "test of intent" and "test of impact," emphasizing that content causing social unrest or inciting violence falls outside constitutional protection.

The case *Facebook India v. Delhi Legislative Assembly* (2021) (W.P. (C) 10130/2021) arose from Facebook's alleged role in the 2020 Delhi riots. The Delhi Assembly sought information from Facebook about its content moderation policies. The Supreme Court ruled that social media platforms have a duty to regulate hate speech, especially when it contributes to violence. It highlighted that platforms cannot claim absolute immunity under free speech principles.

The Indian government has introduced new regulations, such as the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, which require platforms to remove hate speech and unlawful content within specific timeframes. However, critics argue that these rules could be misused to suppress dissent.

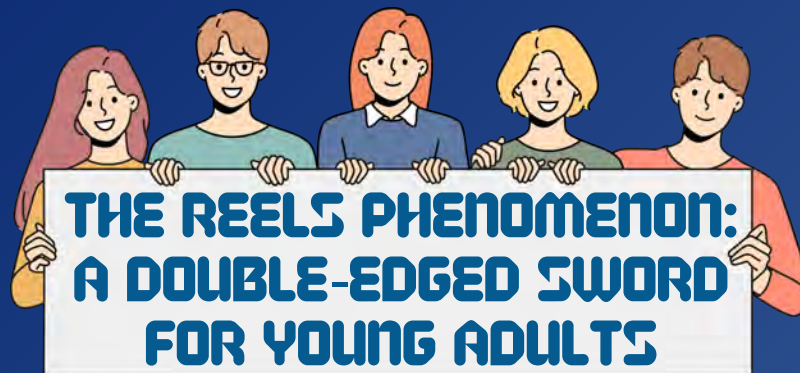
The debate over hate speech and free speech on social media is unlikely to be resolved easily, as it involves deeply held values and legal complexities. While free speech is a fundamental right, it should not come at the cost of enabling hate and harm. Social media platforms must find a middle ground where individuals can express their views freely while ensuring that online spaces remain safe and inclusive. Through responsible regulation, transparency, and public education, society can work toward a digital ecosystem that upholds both the right to speak and the right to live free from hate. Striking the right balance requires cooperation between governments, social media companies, and users.

Soupama Sen





ADDAYA GHOSH



INTRODUCTION: RISING USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA REELS AMONG THE POPULATION

The proliferation of short-form video content on social media platforms has significantly reshaped digital consumption patterns, particularly among the young adults. TikTok, one of the pioneers of this format, gained immense popularity across India, particularly among middle and upper-middle-class users. The platform elevated many individuals to the status of digital influencers, artists and content creators. However, following its ban by the Indian government over security concerns, users actively sought alternative platforms. This shift created an opportunity for Meta, which launched Instagram Reels in 2019. As a result, average time spent by Indian adults on Instagram increased by 3.5%, highlighting a substantial behavioural shift in platform usage.

Instagram Reels quickly evolved into a powerful marketing tool for businesses, advertisers and influencers. Media strategists began producing highly engaging and trend-based content to expand audience reach and enhance brand visibility. Parallely, the number of Indian young adults engaging with Meta-owned platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram has steadily grown. As of September 2022, India reported 400 million WhatsApp users, 232 million Facebook users and 231 million Instagram users. Notably, Instagram has surpassed Facebook in terms of both user engagement and time spent, particularly among individuals aged 18 to 34, who constitute the core demographic for Reels consumption.

STATISTICAL INSIGHTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

Barnhart's 2022 study provides detailed demographic insights into social media usage across leading platforms:

- Snapchat reported 319 million monthly active users, predominantly aged 15–25 years with 54.4% female and 44.6% male users, spending over 25 minutes daily on the app.
- YouTube hosted more than 2 billion monthly users aged 15–35, with 46% female and 54% male users, averaging 30 minutes of daily usage.
- Twitter had 211 million daily active users, mostly aged 18–29, with a gender distribution of 38.4% female and 61.6% male, spending around 31 minutes per day.
- Instagram recorded 2 billion monthly active users, primarily aged 25–34 years, with 48.4% female and 51.8% male users, spending an average of 29 minutes daily.

Facebook accounted for 2.91 billion monthly users in the 25–34 age range, with 43% female and 57% male engagement, and an average usage time of 33 minutes per day.

The surge in Instagram's audience can be attributed largely to the popularity of reels. India leads globally in Google searches for Instagram Reels with nine out of ten users viewing videos weekly.

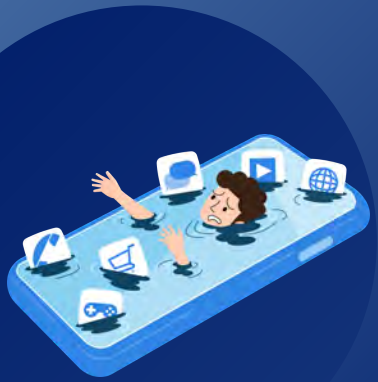
Meta's data shows that 46.1% of Reels viewers are female and 53.9% are male with 10.9% of the audience comprising users above the age of 13. Reels have become Instagram's fastest-growing feature, surpassing Stories in global engagement and user growth. According to Meta's latest report, Instagram now boasts over 2 billion active monthly users in 2023.

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

This paper investigates the impact of short-form video content, specifically reels on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, and Snapchat on the cognitive function of attention among young and middle-aged adults. Attention, defined as the mental process of focusing on specific stimuli while filtering out distractions is a critical component of cognitive functioning. The growing popularity of reels, typically of 15 to 60 seconds long and designed to be visually engaging and algorithmically tailored, necessitates an examination of their influence on attentional processes.

The brevity and rapid content shifts in Reels can enhance user engagement but may also contribute to attentional fragmentation and increased cognitive load. These effects are particularly pronounced in younger individuals who, despite their digital fluency and multitasking abilities, are more vulnerable to distraction and attention deficits.





In contrast, middle-aged adults, while also frequent consumers of digital media, generally demonstrate greater cognitive control and may be more resilient to the disruptive effects of reels.

Research by Pranjal Mani Tripathi (2023) examines the gendered effects of Instagram Reels on attention spans among young adults in Bangalore, revealing differential impacts across male and female participants using MARs scales. Research by Paritosh Srivastava (2023) similarly identifies a negative association between high short-form video consumption and sustained attention and comprehension among youth, using a mixed-method approach.

Nitesh Tripathi's Research (2021) emphasizes how smartphone overuse, frequent interruptions and multitasking disrupt cognitive focus, especially among younger demographics. A study by Mohd Asif and Saniya Kazi (2024) have also found a negative correlation between excessive short-video consumption and academic performance, supported by self-reported struggles in maintaining attention.

BOONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA REELS

1. **Economic Empowerment through Instagram Reels:** The emergence of Instagram Reels has significantly contributed to economic development by creating new income-generating opportunities, particularly for individuals from marginalized communities. Following the 2020 ban on TikTok in India, many creators were termed as “digital refugees” who had turned to Instagram Reels as a viable platform to sustain their digital livelihoods. The platform's wide reach and accessibility have democratized fame, allowing users from diverse backgrounds to gain visibility and recognition. To further incentivize participation, Instagram introduced the Reels Play bonus program, enabling creators to earn substantial income with rewards reaching up to \$10,000 (as per Business Insider, 2021). The growth of the creator economy has diversified income sources, supplementing traditional employment and contributing to overall economic circulation and individual income enhancement.

2. **Creative Outlet and Self-Expression:** Instagram Reels has emerged as a dynamic medium for creative expression, especially among young adults. The platform facilitates the creation of short-form videos with integrated music, offering an accessible and engaging format for showcasing talent and originality. This feature has empowered users by providing a new digital skillset and a versatile outlet for artistic expression. Its high engagement rate, owing to Instagram's unique algorithmic design has made it an influential tool for creative participation and content dissemination.

3. **Engagement and Entertainment:** Reels serve as a significant source of entertainment and relaxation for users, particularly among young adults. The fast-paced, visually stimulating nature of the content captures attention and provides a form of escapism and emotional engagement, enhancing user satisfaction and platform loyalty.

4. **Discoverability and Audience Reach:** Reels play a crucial role in enhancing user visibility and facilitating personal branding. By amplifying discoverability, the feature enables individuals and businesses alike to connect with broader audiences. For entrepreneurs and content creators, reels act as a strategic marketing tool, increasing brand recognition, driving sales and enabling real-time audience engagement. Furthermore, the platform offers valuable consumer insights that can be integrated into broader digital marketing frameworks.

NEGATIVE IMPACT OF REELS

A comparative evaluation of existing literature reveals distinct age-related differences in the cognitive and psychological effects of reels on young and middle-aged adults.

1. **Diminished Attention Span:** Studies indicate that young adults are frequent consumers of short-form content exhibiting significantly reduced attention spans and struggle to sustain focus on singular tasks. The preference for rapid-reward stimuli undermines their ability to engage with complex, long-duration tasks. In contrast, while middle-aged individuals also experience diminished attentional capacity due to reel consumption, the extent is comparatively lower. Their long-standing cognitive habits and professional experiences contribute to more effective attentional control mechanisms.

2. **Cognitive Load and Neurobiological Effects:** Research by Luo and Liang in 2020 highlights that the rapid, high-stimulus nature of reels increases cognitive load among younger users, often leading to mental fatigue. Middle-aged adults also report cognitive exhaustion following reel consumption, though their life experience and developed coping strategies help moderate these effects. Neuroimaging studies show that reels trigger increased dopamine release and heightened activity in the ventral striatum of younger users, reinforcing instant gratification behaviours and contributing to habitual usage. Middle-aged adults demonstrate a similar neurobiological response but with diminished behavioural consequences, attributed to more mature executive functioning and an enhanced capacity for delayed gratification.

3. **Psychological and Behavioural Impacts:** Psychological responses to reel restriction among young adults include heightened anxiety and decreased sustained pleasure, indicating potential dependence. Additionally, this group often multitasks while consuming reels, further fragmenting their attention and affecting their mental health.





4. Reels Affecting the Domains of Development: Social media reels impair short-term memory, emotional regulation and academic performance. They also reduce real-life social interactions and contribute to physical health issues like poor sleep, posture problems, and weight gain due to excessive screen time.

5. Reels Promoting Road Rule Violations: Some users create dangerous reels involving risky driving to gain followers, leading to legal penalties. Authorities have fined several individuals for violating traffic rules and endangering public safety with even minors participating in such stunts.

6. Unrealistic Standards and Comparison: Reels often promote idealized appearances and lifestyles, leading to low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction among young users due to constant comparisons with polished online content.

7. Time-Consuming and Addictive Nature: The dopamine-driven design of reels makes them addictive, causing users to spend excessive time scrolling, which leads to procrastination and reduced productivity.

8. Social Interactions and Relationships: The emphasis on online validation can erode the quality of real-life relationships. Constant exposure to seemingly perfect relationships portrayed in reels encourages unhealthy comparisons, leading to dissatisfaction, emotional strain and sometimes the breakdown of genuine romantic connections. Over-reliance on social media tends to replace deeper, meaningful communication with superficial online interactions.

BALANCING THE REELS TREND AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

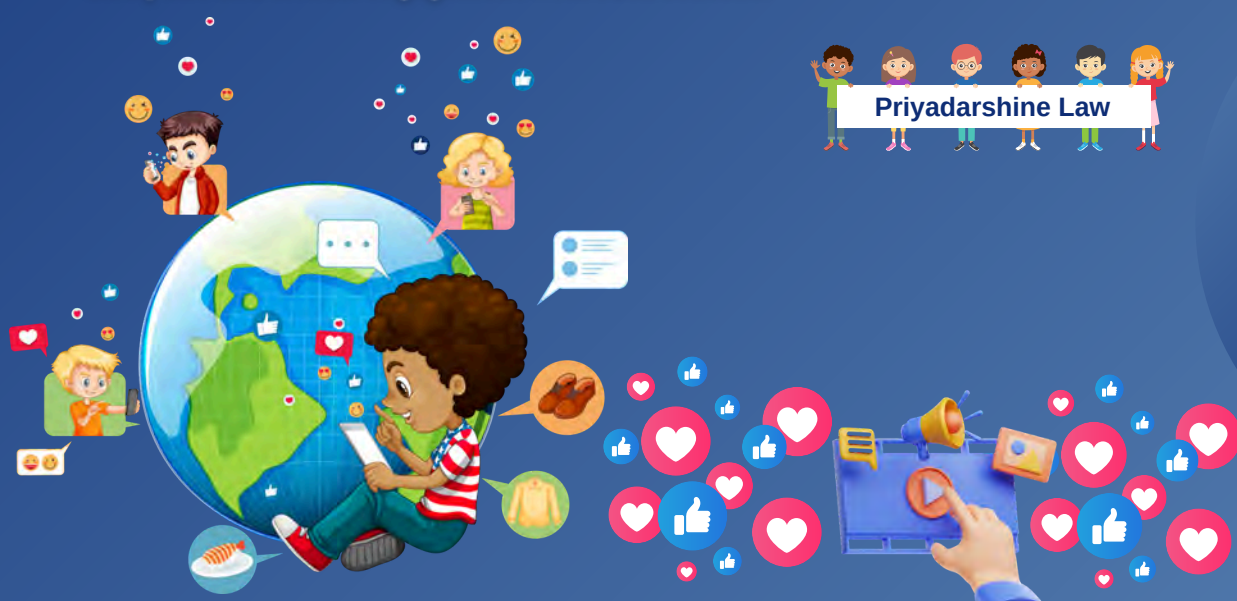
The growing influence of short-form video platforms like Instagram Reels necessitates the adoption of strategies that support digital well-being. Practicing self-regulation by setting boundaries on screen time, using digital wellness tools and incorporating mindfulness helps young adults manage their media consumption consciously. These practices are essential to reduce overexposure, cognitive fatigue and the risk of digital dependency, ultimately promoting better mental health.

In addition, media literacy and critical thinking play a crucial role in helping users navigate the vast amount of content online. By learning to evaluate the credibility and intent behind social media content, young adults can avoid the harmful effects of idealized portrayals, misinformation and comparison culture. Strengthening these cognitive skills empowers users to engage more thoughtfully and responsibly with digital media.

Finally, fostering authentic social connections is key to balancing the immersive nature of online interactions. Encouraging young individuals to prioritize in-person communication and develop meaningful offline relationships can mitigate the isolating effects of constant screen engagement. This not only strengthens emotional well-being but also supports a more holistic and grounded lifestyle in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

In evaluating whether reels are a boon or a curse, it is evident that while they offer the appeal of novelty and convenience, enhancing user engagement and providing quick access to entertainment and information, their overuse carries significant cognitive and academic drawbacks, particularly among the youth. Middle-aged users, though more cognitively resilient, are not entirely exempt from these effects. The growing influence of short-form content like reels demands a balanced and reflective approach to consumption. This review highlights that reels can be both beneficial and detrimental depending on how they are engaged with. By critically assessing their dual nature, the study stresses the need for responsible digital behaviour, supported by digital literacy programs and mindful content consumption practices to mitigate cognitive risks posed by continuous exposure to short-form media. By strategic recommendations to help young adults navigate this digital trend while safeguarding their cognitive, emotional and social well-being, this paper concludes that whether reels will function as a boon or a curse is contingent upon the user's level of awareness, discipline and critical engagement with such content.





SHINJINEE DASGUPTA



ARTICLES

Our Constitution was adopted on January 26th 1950. Along with other fundamental rights, Article 19, which guarantees the right to freedom of speech and expression, was also granted at that time. However during this time there was no internet or social media. Social media came in India in 2004, has grown rapidly and now serves as a digital arena where people express opinion though both public and government use is subject to certain limits. However, this right is not absolute for either the people or the government.

Freedom of speech and expression means that every individual has the natural right to freely express themselves without any interference. Article 19(1)(a) of Indian Constitution states the freedom of speech and expression. In social media freedom of speech and expression implies where censorship will be used less or not at all.

It is essential to protect freedom of speech and expression in a democratic country. But it is also important to restrict this freedom to maintain social order otherwise people might misuse this freedom. Article 19(2) of Constitution of India restrict freedom of speech and expression on certain grounds which are as follows-

1. Sovereignty and integrity of India
2. Security of State
3. Friendly relation with foreign states
4. Public order
5. Decency and Morality
6. Contempt of court
7. Incitement to an offence

1. Restrictions on Social Media

Social media is a medium where users share their opinions, thoughts and other content what they like. In a democratic country freedom of speech and expression in social media is vital. But in some cases users misuse their right on platform. Restriction of Article 19(2) of Constitution of India is also imposed in social media.

Section 69A of the IT Act 2000 empowers the government to block access the online information for national security, public order etc.

2. Practical Restriction on Social Media

Often the Government can directly impose restrictions in social media. Even if they do not use those restrictions directly they use them indirectly. Censorship of political speech is such a method which restricts or control the expressions, statements which relates the political matter of government, authority or entity.

Internet shutdown is another method to impose restriction on social media. By using these methods it prevent the spread of rumors, misinformation or inflammatory content during protests, riots or sometimes during elections.

3. Misuse of restriction in Social Media

In recent times we have seen many content creators are arrested for sharing posts which are against the government or political leaders. Many platforms like Facebook, X(Twitter) and YouTube alleged that they enforce unjust policies under pressure from the government.

Social media is the platform for exercising the right to freedom of speech and expression in the modern era. The main aim of government is to curb the misuse of this right like unwanted trolling, sexual harassment etc. The government has to play a positive and constructive role in preserving the essential goodwill so that the citizens of a nation can enjoy the balanced promotion of freedom of speech and expression.



ADRIJA DEY

We frequently lose track of the differences between the real world and the real world, especially on social media and in an attempt to distinguish between the two, we often blur the lines. Social media does not always reflect the true nature of individuals. It showcases their polished personas, presenting themselves as perfect as they aspire to be. As a result, people end up living a life that is different from their actual one. Nonetheless, many individuals find this reel existence comforting, as it provides them the freedom and opportunity to express themselves in new ways. For many people, social media acts as an escape, almost like a safe haven from their reality.

How people perceive social media greatly influences their views and perspectives. It is crucial to recognize and comprehend the actual circumstances of our lives and remember that the social media, like a movie is basically a source of entertainment for us. On social media, individuals often find themselves caught between others' viewpoints and their personal preferences. Under this pressure, many choose to prioritize the former and neglect their own likes and dislikes. They may lose sight of their self-worth, desiring to follow what pleases the audience instead of what genuinely interests them. In the competition for social media fame, reel life often overshadows real life.

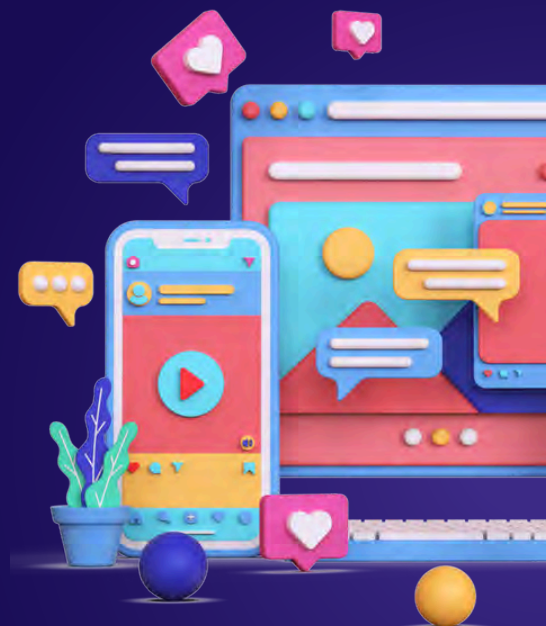
The best way to grasp the reality of our lives is by actively living them. If we fail to recognize this soon, we risk falling into the trap of reel life, losing ourselves in its quagmire and forgetting the very essence of our real lives. Thus, it is important to realize that becoming obsessed with the reel world is not something to take pride in. We must strive to maintain the distinction between the two and thereby remain firmly grounded in reality.



ATRAYEE MAJI



In this rapidly digitalizing world, we live in two worlds today: the “REAL” and the “REEL”. The real world is where there are complicated ideas, conflicting opinions and hard truths. The reel world built on social media which is polished, filtered and designed to attract clicks, likes and followers. Somewhere between these two, our right to free speech is being silently tested. As social media becomes our primary platform of expression, the boundary between freedom of speech and digital control increasingly gets blurred. The Indian Constitution may enshrine the right to free speech, but the reality of online trolling, content moderation and imprecise platform rules regularly redefine what we “feel” safe saying. It’s not simply about what’s “legal” anymore; but what’s “visible”, what’s “acceptable” and ultimately what’s “permitted”. We scroll, we post, we speak — but how often do we really express? In a world where every thought is a potential caption and every opinion a potential controversy, we often trade authenticity for acceptance. Truth does not trend and thus we adapt — we post what’s acceptable, soften what’s sharp, and speak in a language that is algorithm-friendly. Meanwhile, platforms claim neutrality but curate our feeds. Free speech exists on paper, but online, it is shaped by popularity, platform policy, and public mood.



DEBABRATI ROY CHOWDHURY

Social media, conceived as a democratizing force, a digital agora where voices could rise and fall on the merits of their arguments, has morphed into a complex, often contradictory landscape. While it amplifies the mundane and the sensational with equal fervor, a disconcerting silence often descends when confronted with systemic injustice, violence, and the urgent need for collective action. This phenomenon, particularly pronounced in the Indian context, reveals a troubling disparity: a clamorous online presence that falters when faced with the actual of real-world struggle.

The Indian social media sphere, a tapestry woven from diverse languages, cultures, and political affiliations, showcases a remarkable capacity for engagement. From viral dance challenges to heated political debates, the digital space buzzes with activity. However, this same vibrant context often evaporates when confronted with issues that demand a sustained, unified stance against injustice.

The digital realm, once envisioned as a boundless domain where the voices of the multitude could resonate with equitable force, has, alas, transformed into a labyrinthine expanse of perplexing contradictions. While it magnifies the trivial and the sensational with an almost indiscriminate zeal, a disquieting hush descends when confronted with the stark realities of systemic injustice, the brutal cadence of violence, and the imperative call for collective action. This phenomenon, particularly acute within the vibrant, yet often perplexing, Indian digital landscape, unveils a troubling disparity: a clamorous online presence that falters and recedes when faced with the tangible struggles of the real world. The Indian social media sphere, a rich tapestry woven from the diverse threads of myriad languages, cultural nuances, and fervent political allegiances, exhibits a remarkable capacity for engagement. From the ephemeral allure of viral dance challenges to the tempestuous storms of heated political debates, the digital space pulsates with a ceaseless, almost frenetic activity. However, this very vibrancy, this effervescent energy, often dissipates like morning mist when faced with issues that demand a sustained, unified stance against the encroaching shadows of injustice.

One of the most insidious ailments plaguing this digital landscape is the pervasive tendency towards performative activism. Social media, in many instances, becomes a mere stage for the fleeting expressions of solidarity, manifested through ephemeral hashtags and transient profile picture filters, rather than a robust platform for sustained, meaningful engagement. The capricious whims of the “trend” cycle dictate the lifespan of a cause, often relegating crucial issues to the digital graveyard, where they languish in obscurity once the initial surge of online attention subsides. Consider the myriad instances of violence inflicted upon marginalized communities within India's borders. Outrage erupts like a tempestuous squall online, hashtags trend with feverish intensity, and pronouncements of solidarity flood timelines with a deluge of well-intentioned words. Yet, this digital fervor, this tempest of indignation, rarely translates into sustained, tangible action on the ground. The voices that once roared with righteous anger fade into a whisper, leaving the victims and their communities to grapple with the harrowing aftermath, their cries often lost in the digital void. International influences, particularly the pervasive algorithms of Western social media giants, further complicate this already intricate landscape. These algorithms, designed to maximize engagement and capture fleeting attention, inadvertently contribute to the prevalence of this performative culture. The focus shifts from substantive discourse, from the nuanced exploration of complex issues, to the seductive allure of viral content, where emotional triggers and sensationalism reign supreme. This commodification of social issues, this reduction of complex realities to easily digestible, shareable snippets, often strips them of their inherent nuance and context, leaving behind a hollow echo of the original struggle.

The silence of the influencers, those digital luminaries who command the attention of vast online audiences, is particularly telling.



While they readily endorse products, promote idyllic travel destinations, and curate meticulously crafted lifestyle content, they often remain conspicuously silent on issues of social justice. This silence is not merely a matter of personal choice; it reflects the inherent contradictions of a system where engagement is inextricably linked to brand endorsements and corporate partnerships. Speaking out against injustice, taking a stand against the prevailing tides of power, can be a perilous endeavor, potentially alienating sponsors and jeopardizing lucrative opportunities. The chilling specter of backlash, both online and offline, also contributes to this pervasive silence. In a highly polarized environment, where dissenting opinions are met with vitriolic attacks and targeted harassment, expressing oneself can lead to online abuse, doxing, and even physical threats. This chilling effect silences many voices, particularly those from marginalized communities who are already vulnerable, their voices often drowned out by the cacophony of the dominant narrative.

The rise of cyber crimes, including online harassment, doxing, and the insidious spread of misinformation, further complicates the dynamics of digital activism, casting a long shadow over the promise of digital empowerment. These tactics are often deployed as weapons to silence dissenting voices, particularly those who dare to challenge powerful institutions or individuals. The veil of anonymity afforded by the internet emboldens perpetrators, making it exceedingly difficult to hold them accountable for their actions. Digital protests, while possessing the potential to be powerful tools for mobilizing public opinion and galvanizing collective action, are also susceptible to manipulation and co-option, their efficacy compromised by malicious actors. Hashtag campaigns, intended to amplify the voices of the marginalized, can be hijacked by those seeking to spread disinformation and sow discord. Online movements can be infiltrated by bots and trolls, disrupting genuine efforts to organize and advocate for change, turning the digital agora into a battleground of conflicting narratives.

However, the transformative power of digital protests cannot be dismissed outright. The Arab Spring, the #MeToo movement, and the Black Lives Matter protests stand as testaments to the potential of social media to mobilize large-scale movements for social and political change, demonstrating its capacity to ignite the flames of revolution. In India, digital protests have played a vital role in raising awareness about pressing issues such as farmer's rights, student movements, and the pervasive scourge of gender-based violence, proving that the digital space can be a powerful catalyst for change.

India, with its vast and diverse population, faces unique challenges in navigating the intricate complexities of digital activism. The rapid proliferation of internet access, coupled with alarmingly low digital literacy rates, creates a fertile breeding ground for the rampant spread of misinformation and the insidious proliferation of cyber crimes. The Indian government's increasing focus on regulating online content, while ostensibly aimed at combating cyber crimes and protecting national security, raises legitimate concerns about the potential for stifling dissent and suppressing legitimate criticism. The digital divide, a chasm that separates those with access to digital resources from those without, further exacerbates these challenges. Marginalized communities, who are often the most vulnerable to injustice, may lack the resources and skills to effectively participate in online discourse, perpetuating their marginalization and limiting their ability to advocate for their fundamental rights.

To break the cycle of performative activism and cultivate a more responsible and effective digital space, a concerted effort is required. We must prioritize sustained engagement, moving beyond the ephemeral allure of fleeting hashtags and focusing on long-term commitment to social justice issues. We must amplify the voices of the marginalized, creating platforms for them to share their stories and perspectives, actively seeking out and amplifying voices that are often silenced or ignored. We must combat misinformation, developing critical thinking skills and media literacy to discern credible information from propaganda. We must promote an ethical influencer culture, encouraging influencers to use their platforms to raise awareness about social justice issues and advocate for positive change. We must advocate for digital rights, supporting policies that protect freedom of expression and privacy online. We must bridge the digital divide, investing in digital literacy programs and infrastructure to ensure that marginalized communities have equal access to the internet. We must foster critical dialogue, encouraging nuanced and respectful discourse on complex social issues. And, crucially, we must focus on offline action, recognizing that digital activism should complement, not replace, tangible efforts to organize protests, support community initiatives, and hold institutions accountable. The digital space holds the potential to be a powerful instrument for social change, but realizing this potential requires a conscious, collective effort to move beyond performative activism and cultivate a culture of responsible engagement. Only then can we break the silence and harness the collective power of the internet to build a more just and equitable world.





DIYA ACHARJEE

With over 1.4 billion people and 800 million internet users, India is one of the world's biggest social media markets. Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), and WhatsApp are everywhere — from cities to the smallest villages. What once connected people and encouraged creativity is now a space where debates, influence, activism, and misinformation collide. As the line between reel and real blurs, so does our understanding of free speech. Social media in India shows extremes. We see influencers flaunting luxury and curated lifestyles. Much of the content is staged or exaggerated for enhancing views. Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution guarantees free speech, but with limits for public order and morality. In today's online reality, however, this balance is hard to maintain.

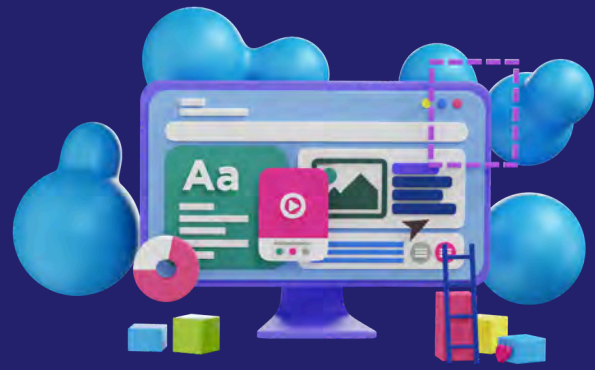
To tackle online chaos, the Indian government introduced IT Rules 2021, asking platforms to trace message origins and take down flagged content within 36 hours. However, this does not always result in positive action and effect.

An advantageous effect of an all powerful social media occurs only when it can assume a reformist role and bring to fore grave injustice committed to women and marginalized sections of the population as we have seen happening in case of the Me Too Movement and the CAA protests. But these platforms are also flooded with hate speech, fake news, and abuse. The line between free expression and harmful speech is often crossed, creating a toxic digital environment.

Thus, social media feels like a free space — but to be used and utilized with checks and balances.



NEHA MALLICK



Social media has transformed the way we communicate and express ourselves. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok give us the chance to share our opinion, ideas, and stories with the world. But with this newfound freedom comes a challenge: how do we balance the right to free speech with the potential harm that can arise from what people post? The idea of "reel" versus "real"—where "reel" represents curated, idealized versions of life, and "real" refers to more authentic, unfiltered experiences—can help explain the complexities of free speech on social media.

One of the most powerful things about social media is that it gives everyone a platform to share their voice. Before the internet, expressing one's opinion publicly often meant going through traditional media, which was not accessible to everyone. Now, anyone with an internet connection can post their thoughts or experiences. This is especially important for marginalized groups and activists who may not have had a chance to be heard otherwise. Movements like #MeToo and Black Lives Matter grew largely because social media allowed people to connect, organize, and speak out in ways they could not before.

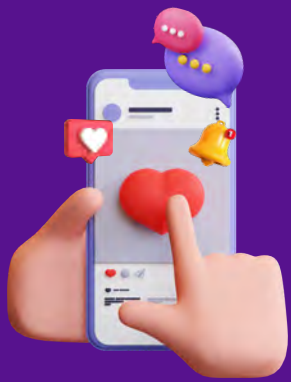
While social media gives us the freedom to speak, it also creates space for harmful content to spread. Misinformation, hate speech, and online bullying have become major problems on these platforms. The anonymity that social media offers can make people feel like they can say anything without consequences, leading to posts that can be damaging or even dangerous.

The distinction between "reel" and "real" becomes important here. Social media often promotes an edited, perfect version of life (the "reel"), but it is important to remember that the "real" world is way more complicated. Unfortunately, this idealized version of life can often conceal the real conversations that need to happen. Misinformation and harmful content can spread quickly, and the impact of this can be far-reaching.

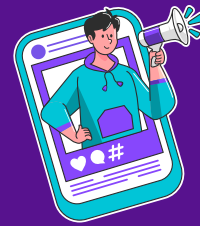
Censorship is a major concern when it comes to free speech on social media. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter try to moderate harmful content, such as hate speech and false information, but this can lead to accusations of censorship. Some argue that these platforms are unfairly removing content or silencing voices, especially when it comes to controversial or political topics. On the other hand, if platforms don't moderate content, they run the risk of allowing hate speech or dangerous ideas to thrive. The challenge is finding a balance between free speech and protecting people from harmful content. Social media companies must figure out how to moderate content fairly while respecting people's right to express them. Some suggest independent review boards to oversee moderation decisions, while others believe governments should step in to ensure these platforms don't allow dangerous content to spread unchecked.

As social media continues to shape the way we communicate, we must keep thinking about how to maintain that balance between free speech and responsibility. While it's important to protect the right to express ideas and opinions, we also need to consider how to prevent harm, misinformation, and hate from spreading. Navigating this balance isn't easy, but it's a crucial conversation as we move forward in a world where social media plays such an important role.





SASMIT PAUL



In this digital age, the lines between “reel” and “real” are increasingly blurred, particularly when it comes to social media and free speech. Social media has become an integral part of modern communication, enabling the people to express their opinion, connect globally, and share ideas freely. However, this newfound freedom of speech and expression raises significant questions when it comes to establish a balance between free speech and the propagation of harmful content, particularly in the Indian context.

The phrase “reel v/s real” abridge the tension between the digital(reel) world of social median and the real-world implications of speech shared online. While social media offers unprecedented freedom, it also introduces new convolution in defining the limits of free speech and regulation of content.

The concept of free speech, a fundamental right in many democratic societies, is being tested in new ways on the digital platforms, leading to a complex debate about the regulation of online content. Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India guarantees the freedom of speech and expression. These rights ensure that individuals can voice their thoughts in front of the public. In media freedom of speech and expression has been subjected to regulation and ethical standards. However, social media has largely operated in a less regulated space, giving rise to new challenges and complexities in ensuring that the free speech does not come at the cost of harm to others. On the positive side, social media has allowed us to bypass traditional media gatekeepers and directly engage with the global audience, democratizing access to information and enabling grassroots activism.

While social media platforms offer unparalleled freedom of speech, they also present a unique set of challenges. One of the significant challenges is the spread of misinformation. This misinformation can have deep rooted consequences. Influencing election, public health responses, and even inciting violence.



Another issue is the prevalence of hate speech, harassment, and cyberbullying online. The anonymity provided by social media platforms has made it easier for individuals to engage in harmful behaviour without facing immediate consequences.

In the Vishal Bhardwaj v. Union of India (2020), the Supreme Court of India directed the government to put in place a robust mechanism for monitoring and removing harmful content, including hate speech and controversial material from social media. The case acknowledged the responsibility of social media platforms in curbing content that could potentially affect public stability. This judgment balanced the protection of free speech with the need to prevent the spread of content that might incite violence or division.

Governments around the world are grappling with how to regulate free speech on social media. For instance, in India, the government has implemented the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, which require platforms to take down offensive content within a specific time frame. While these regulations are designed to curb the spread of misinformation and hate speech, they have generated concerns about the potential for overreach and the adverse effect on free speech. Moreover, the social media companies themselves have also begun to take greater responsibility in moderating content. The “reel” world of social media provides individuals with the ability to communicate freely, but the “real” world of laws and regulations must ensure that this freedom does not infringe on the rights and safety of others.

Social media has become a double-edged sword in the realm of free speech. It offers incredible opportunities for self-expression, activism, and communication, but it also poses challenges in managing harmful content, misinformation, and hate speech. The debate of “reel versus real” highlights the tension between the freedom to express opinion and the need to regulate harmful content.

SHRISHTI SINGH

In this digital age everyone is flooded with all sorts of harmful misinformation and even some pretty wicked "deep fakes" which can dismantle democratic processes, people's rights to speak freely and keep things under control for everyone too. While social media has contributed to the standardization of speech, it has also become a reproducing ground for manipulated content, blurring the lines between facts and fiction. The legal landscape in India is trying to evolve policies to address these challenges, but the balance between limiting misinformation and protecting free speech remains delicate.

The Legal Challenge of Striking Fake News and Deep fakes

The Indian legal system lacks a separate law specifically to address deep fakes, but existing statutes attempt to regulate the spread of disinformation. The Information Technology Act, 2000 (IT Act) plays a big role, particularly Section 66D, which penalizes impersonation using electronic means, and Section 69A, which empowers the government to block access to content that threatens national security or public order.

Another method through which the Indian Penal Code provides to deal with defamation and causing statements to public disorder is under sections 499 and 505. The Representation of the People Act, 1951 also prohibits the dissemination of false information which attempts to influence elections.

One of the most significant Indian cases demonstrating the risk of disinformation is *Shreya Singhal v. Union of India* (2015), in which the Supreme Court ruled that Section 66A of the IT Act was ambiguous and a breach of the right to free speech. The ruling emphasizes that accuracy must be maintained in the definition of illegal content without inhibiting genuine expression.

Balancing Misinformation Laws with Free Speech Rights

The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that though free speech is a fundamental right under Article 19(1) (a) of the Constitution, it can be restricted to reasonable extent under Article 19(2) in the nature of public order, defamation, and security of the state in the interest of the nation. The Indian juridical system, however, continues to be faulted with its expansive interpretations, which could lead to undue censorship.

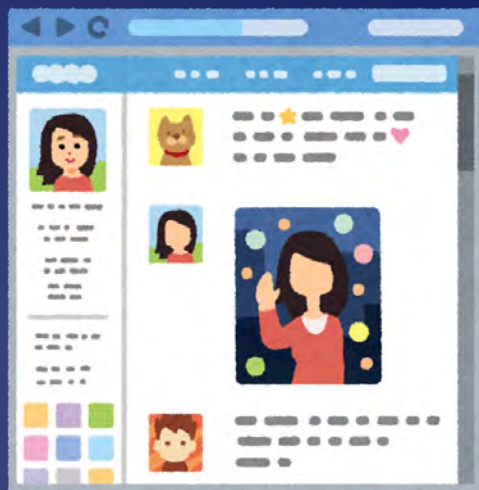
For example, in *Anuradha Bhasin v. Union of India* (2020), the Court reiterated that censorship of speech that is, closing off the internet needs to be necessary and proportionate. Such a principle would be important to maintain while censoring deep fakes and misinformation so as not to overreach and silence free speech.

How Social Media Platforms Respond to Disinformation

Big social networks like Facebook, Twitter (now just called X) and YouTube have put up defences against fake news. They apply fact checks and have also set rules about what content they allow on their pages. Under Indian law now there's a set of new rules that platforms have to strictly follow which says they must proactively check harmful content and have to erase misinformation as fast as lightning. However, there are still lingering worries about how opaque these moderation processes are and whether they run the risk of becoming arbitrary censorship mechanisms.

As deep fake technology advances, the Indian legal framework must also evolve with it to address emerging threats while upholding free speech. Legislative clarity, judicial oversight, and platform accountability are essential to strike the right balance between combating misinformation and preserving free and uninhibited discourse.





SAMADRITA DEB

Social media is a part of everyday life in the age of the internet, influencing how people communicate, share information, and express their opinions. It is both a mirror and a stage, reflecting society's mind while also shaping it. The disparity between the "reel" and the "real" on social media is stark. What usually appears online is an idealized version of life, opinions, and identities—crafted to attract attention and approval. This curated world contrasts sharply with the complex realities of real life. As this divide grows, a major question arises: is social media helping or hindering free speech?

Free speech is a basic right rooted in the belief that individuals must be free to express their ideas without fear of repression. Ideally, social media platforms are modern public squares where this right can thrive. But in reality, things are more complicated. These platforms are governed by policies, algorithms, and moderation systems that decide what is visible and what is hidden or removed. As a result, not all voices are treated equally.

Because social media content is constructed, it is often designed for impact rather than authenticity. What audiences see is usually filtered or edited to match trends, aesthetics, or ideological preferences. This "reel" world distorts perception, shaping belief through selective representation. As a result, honest voices can be overshadowed by more polished or popular narratives.

This has serious consequences for free speech. When algorithms promote specific kinds of content, they shape the conversation itself. Mainstream voices or those that attract high engagement are amplified, while others fade into the background. In such a climate, people may hesitate to express unpopular or controversial opinions—not because of formal censorship, but because of the risk of being ignored, attacked, or silenced. The right to speak may still exist, but the opportunity to be heard is limited.

Content moderation systems also raise the issue of who decides what is acceptable. While it's important to regulate harmful material, moderation guidelines are often vague, inconsistently applied, or influenced by external factors. This opens the door for bias and selective enforcement, making it difficult to distinguish fair regulation from unjust censorship. In such cases, the principle of free speech is at risk.

Addressing these issues calls for a multi-layered approach.

Users must become aware of how digital platforms influence their thinking. Media literacy is essential for distinguishing image from reality. Platforms must be held accountable for transparent and fair moderation that supports both expression and safety. As a society, we must encourage values like honesty, tolerance and critical thinking over conformity and sensationalism.



SAJEDA ZAMAN



Reel life is an edited, filtered version of reality shared on social media, portraying a deliberately constructed image. In contrast, real life is unfiltered, imperfect, and embraces authenticity.

Social media fosters a world where people present refined versions of themselves, often living parallel lives. It serves as both an escape and a platform for self-expression, making reel life seem more appealing. Over time, the boundary between the two has faded, leading to unrealistic expectations and comparisons.

Free Speech on Social Media: What Can and Can't Be Said -

While social media provides a space for free speech, there are limitations:

- 1.Hate Speech – Offensive speech targeting identity or characteristics is protected under free speech laws unless it incites violence or threats.
- 2.Harassment – Unwanted behavior that degrades or humiliates someone is not protected under free speech, especially when it involves true threats.
- 3.Misinformation – False information, while often protected, has exceptions like fraud or defamation.
- 4.Obscenity –Sexual content is protected unless it is deemed obscene based on contemporary community standards.

Reel versus Real life is an illusion only if we fail to differentiate between them. While social media offers entertainment and connection, overindulgence in the reel world can be misleading. Understanding this distinction is crucial. Just as we immerse ourselves in a movie but return to reality when it ends, we must recognize social media's reel world for what it is – curated and often a far cry from real. It is up to us to maintain balance, understand reality, and use social media as a tool for growth and enrichment.

SHATADEEP GHOSH

In today's hyper-connected world, the lines between actual life and reel life have become increasingly blurred, particularly with the rise of social media and its emphasis on curated perfection. While "reel life" as portrayed on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, often presents a glossy, filtered version of reality, "real life" is characterized by its typical ups and downs.

The allure of "reel life" lies in its ability to offer a seemingly effortless and glamorous existence, far removed from the struggles and challenges of everyday life. Content creators on social media often present carefully crafted images and videos, highlighting successes, achievements, and moments of joy, while generally omitting the less glamorous experiences of their real lives.

This kind of a specially designed presentation of life experiences can create a false impression of what constitutes a "good life," leading to feelings of inadequacy and comparison among viewers.

In contrast to the idealized world of "reel life," "real life" is characterized by its imperfections and complexities. It is a world of messy kitchens, forgotten deadlines, health hazards, career hiccups and numerous other interventions that sometimes make us dysfunctional and disjointed. This however is absent from the carefully constructed narratives that are available on the various social media platforms.

The constant exposure to the "reel life" of others can lead to a dangerous cycle of comparison and self-doubt. When individuals are constantly comparing their own "real life" to the idealized images they see online, they may begin to feel inadequate, anxious, and even depressed.

To navigate the complexities of the digital age, it's crucial to cultivate a sense of authenticity and self-acceptance.

Instead of striving to live up to the unattainable standards of "reel life," individuals should focus on accepting and acknowledging the imperfections of "real life" and finding joy in the simple moments that make up everyday existence.

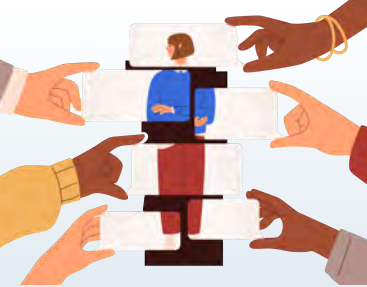
The reel story is never accurate. It can be effortless for us to jump into a fictional and virtual world to avoid the harsh truth of real life but that is only a brief diversion to be enjoyed only as a form of entertainment and nothing else.



A vibrant illustration of a hand holding a blue smartphone. The screen displays several colorful icons representing digital communication: a yellow smiley face with heart eyes, a red location pin, a blue speech bubble, a yellow envelope, a blue camera icon, a red exclamation mark, a yellow smiley face, a blue magnifying glass, a purple question mark, a blue paper airplane, a pink star, a blue thumbs up, a red heart, a yellow star, a blue circle, a purple cube, and a white cloud. The background is a gradient of orange and yellow, with a dark blue area at the bottom left.

It seems that social media is used for freedom of speech. However, it merely represents current trends. Funny reels and viral videos garner far more attention than real issues. While dance videos and memes get audiences, serious themes are shoved aside. A real voice gets lost in the reel world. So, even if we can speak online, not every voice is heard in the same way. That is the difference between reel and real freedom.

Social media was flooded with reactions, but in real life, the damage was already done. Forests were cleared, animals lost their homes, and yet the action from authorities came only after the public outrage went viral online. This clearly shows how often the “reel” world reacts only after the “real” world suffers.



SURANJANA BASU



Have you ever wondered that sometimes we find ourselves caught under the vicious cycle of real versus reel life? Yes, we often forget the distinction between the two on social media.

Reel life is a portrayal of an edited and filtered version represented on social media. It is a part of that part of the user's life that is deliberately made public and available to their respective audience.

Real-life is an imperfect and non-fictional part of our lives that we represent. It embraces the reality distinct from the reel existence on social media. It is ironic how we become confused in differentiating between them.

It is rightly said that all that glitters is not gold. Social media does not always portray the real side of people. It represents their refined personalities who view themselves as perfect as they wish to be. Because of this, people are living a parallel life. Nevertheless, individuals even find reel life comforting, as they get the ability and freedom to express them and act differently. To people, social media also serves as an escape mechanism from reality. They have made this a new normal. And surprisingly, the barrier between reel versus real has almost become invisible. Just like we watch a movie and get immersed or fascinated by its plot, but whenever a movie comes to an end, we alert ourselves to get back to reality. Similarly, we have to learn not to brag about the reel-ness of social media too much. At last, it is the young generation who can bring out this change. It depends on the view and perception of the people as to how they perceive social media. We have to know and understand the reality of our lives.

3 Ways to know if you feel trapped in the reel-ness

•**Do not forget to enjoy the essence of life:** As a member of social media, whenever we witness something intriguing, our initial thoughts are hooked on letting everyone else know about it. In utter excitement, we want to discuss the same with others. And because of this, we fail to embrace that moment in our lives. We tend to become engrossed in making it social and public and fail to grasp the meaning behind our happiness. The day we lose ourselves to reel life also becomes the day when we learn to neglect the reality of our lives. It seems as if social media users have been burying the realness of their lives by unlocking the reel part of it.

Therefore, learn the difference and try to separate the reel from the real. Live the moment entirely. Do not forget to enjoy the real essence of life. Not everything is supposed to be made known and made public.

•Know that social media is not everything :

Social media has been a changemaker in our lives since the period of evolution in technological advancements. Social media has given birth to reel oriented lives today. Social media is such a platform that allows anyone and everyone to control our lives without consent. We know that on social media platforms, users are under a 24*7 Watchful eye of our viewers and, this is where we wish to portray a filtered version of ourselves by depicting a way of our lives that is felt necessary according to the standards of life as per social media. And such things are done under pressure to catapult the followers.

•**Do not allow others' opinions to define:** On social media, people often find themselves juggling with others' and their own choices. Under such influence, individuals opt for the former and forget their own likes/dislikes. They lose their self-worth and wish to pursue the interests of the audience rather than their own. In this race of social media popularity, reel-ness overpowers Realness. Do not let the opinions of people mold you into someone you are not. Process and understand that your self-worth matters the most.

Learn to distinguish between the reel and real while you are there on social media. Aim at building self-confidence and self-esteem. Learn to understand yourself. Thus, do not get caught up in the reel-ness of social media.

Where is reel life heading: Reel life appears to be highly attractive, perfect and far from imperfections. Such that, real-life seems highly different and distinct from it. In the reel part of our lives, we find an escape and retreat from our actual reality while enjoying the former. Yet, It is of no surprise that people have been becoming comfortable & satisfied with the identity of the virtual world as represented and portrayed by them. Reel life has impacted our lives in ways one cannot imagine.

Firstly, people have been bonding with strangers online. Even if they are far away, social media has been bridging the gap between the two. Reel-ness has overpowered the Realness.





Individuals are suffering from inadequacy about their way of life & appearance. One is on the verge of feeling envious and insecure by looking over the perfect people on social media. Reel world has had a remarkable impact on them which is quite evident in their personalities.

The reel part of our lives has generated a sense of Fear of missing out. Whenever one of the viewer's notices or comes across glimpses of another's privileged life on social media, they tend to feel insecure, less valued and dissatisfied with themselves.

According to the studies and reports, individuals are more prone to feeling isolated if they engross themselves mainly over the virtual part of their lives on social media. Whereas, by reducing the attention towards social media, one is likely to realise and focus on one's self-worth. Therefore, we can say that social media is impacting our lives fully.

How is reality different from the reel world on social media?

Well, Spending time on social media or technology is not a bad thing at all. Until and unless we use it appropriately and ethically. We ought not to get drawn to it in a very obsessive way. We have to act accordingly.

The best way to know the reality of our lives is by living it. If we do not understand this sooner, we will get caught in the bait of reel life while losing ourselves into the dangerous trap. Reel and Real are the same as Private vs Public. But ironically, we have been blending them both. Such that we have been away from reality for some time now.

The reality of our lives can keep us grounded, known and rooted. The following points will let you know-how.

When we are living in the actual world, you add more value and importance to your life. You believe in yourself and tend to understand certain things from a real-life perspective, unlike those displayed in the reel world.

Staying away from the virtual world will positively impact and make you more content and at peace with yourself.

Keeping our life private gives you a sense of freedom with the ability to enjoy it without living life as per the standards of social media.

By living in reality, we will learn to respect and care about other things.

By facing reality, we will tend to feel connected to your purpose in life rather than getting drawn to a way of life that others are living.

Thus, we have to be cognitive and rational enough to understand the distinction between reel vs real.

Conclusion

To conclude, Reel vs Real is just an illusion only if we learn to differentiate between the two. As social media users, individuals tend to underestimate their way of life while getting drawn to a more privileged part of others lives. Indeed, the reel world is enjoyable and comforting as it does render a platform meant for recreation and entertainment. Nonetheless, we have to be mindful when it comes to facing the reality of our lives.


It has to be noted that overdoing and getting obsessive about the reel world is not something to be proud of. The distinction and difference have to be maintained. The virtual world is not always what it pretends to be. Nevertheless, it depends on how we perceive the change.

Social media is a platform that shapes our lives in a good way. It helps us evolve, unfold and learn more about certain necessary things. But, it does not force its opinions and decisions upon us. It is us who make it look like that. Thus, learn the distinction and difference between the real vs real on social media!



AMAZING

FACTS



In China even Winnie the Pooh got censored by the Chinese authorities as people compared the character to President Xi Jinping. Now the bear is a symbol of free speech resistance.



Singapore's Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (POFMA), passed in 2019, allows government ministers to order corrections or removal of content they determine to be false.



Turkey has repeatedly blocked access to social media platforms and passed laws requiring local data storage, with authorities able to remove content deemed offensive.



Nigeria had temporarily banned Twitter after the platform removed a controversial tweet by then-President Buhari demonstrating how political factors influence free speech approaches.



Social media platforms like the Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are blocked in China, and platforms like Weibo and WeChat employ thousands of content moderators to comply with government censorship requirements.



South Korea's "Cinderella Law" restricts access to online games for children under 16 between midnight and 6am, representing a unique form of internet regulation.





Jordan's Media Commission Reform: Jordan has implemented more balanced regulatory approaches that allow for greater online expression compared to many regional neighbours, with a focus on media literacy initiatives rather than purely restrictive policies.



Lebanon's Digital Space: Despite political and economic challenges, Lebanon maintains one of the region's most open digital environments, allowing diverse political viewpoints and criticism that would be restricted elsewhere in the region.



Kuwait's Constitutional Court Protection: Kuwait's Constitutional Court has struck down several proposed restrictions on social media expression, maintaining relatively stronger protections for online speech than many Gulf States.



UAE's Selective Digital Innovation: While maintaining strict controls on political speech, the UAE has created innovation zones and digital business environments that allow for greater technical development of social media platforms and services.



Tunisia's Post-Revolution Framework: Following the Arab Spring, Tunisia established constitutional protections for freedom of expression that extend to social media, creating one of the most progressive legal environments for free speech in North Africa.



Right to Be Forgotten: The EU's recognition of the "right to be forgotten" has given individuals greater control over their personal information online, allowing for removal of outdated or irrelevant information from search engines.



The Online Safety Act in United Kingdom created broad obligations for platforms to restrict "legal but harmful" content, raising significant concerns about impacts on legitimate speech.





Countries like Sweden and Finland maintain some of the world's most transparent government records systems, extending to digital governance and enabling public scrutiny of content regulation.



Ghana's Media Plurality: Ghana has developed a diverse digital media landscape with limited government interference, supporting multiple independent online news sources and social media platforms.



Saudi Arabia's Aggressive Surveillance: Saudi authorities have deployed advanced surveillance tools to monitor social media users, with documented cases of using platform data to identify and prosecute critics of the government.



Bahrain's Online Monitoring Units: Bahrain has established specialized cybercrime units primarily focused on identifying and prosecuting social media users who criticize the government or royal family.



Qatar's Selective Content Blocking: Qatar maintains a content filtering system that blocks websites deemed politically sensitive or contradicting "national values," though implementation is less comprehensive than some neighbours.



Poland's government has exerted increasing control over media outlets, including digital platforms, through regulatory pressure and ownership changes, limiting independent voices online.



Intermediary Liability Concerns: India's intermediary liability framework has created legal uncertainty for platforms, incentivizing over-removal of potentially controversial content.





EVENT GALLERY

INTRA COLLEGE MOOT COURT COMPETITION (18.03.2025)



INTER SEMESTER DEBATE COMPETITION (20.03.2025)



LEGAL AWARENESS CAMP (25.04.2025)



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