Accountability of new media & their users-An Indian perspective

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Abstract-New media has become the important communication tool of the society around the world. Facebook, twitter& you tube are major social media players which are being usedextensively by the people. Even the general elections of many countries are fought with keeping social media campaigns at a central stage. The generalelectionsinIndia in the year 2014 had seen a rampant use of the virtual media and its impact on the voters. The presidential election in the USA had seen candidates spending their funds more on social media campaign.

This is the brighter side of the story but at the flip side, we have experienced many drawbacks and ill effects of the new media. With the advent and acceleration of this powerful media in the last decade, many complex issues have been arisedand created serious discord in socio-political life .The characteristic of social media is such that it is very difficult to control the contents and the activities to curb it'sside effects. Many countries have brought in mechanisms so that its negative impact could be reduced. This paper would do a study of Indian social media activities and various steps taken by the government authorities including information technology acts provisions in the recent past. It will also look into psyche of Indian citizen in using this tool .Sensitization efforts from social media platformshave already started that also would be appraisedin the present social media scenario.

Introduction-

Social media sites which have dominatedthe world have influenced the mankind in all walks of life. Trade and business ,Science and Technology ,international relations , human development ,education, art, culture, cinema ,politics everything under the sun has strong co relation with this dynamic media. Facebook, twitter,myspace,what'sap,instagram are the major players in the multifaceted communication platforms. The

technological advancement in these communication tools and gadgets has made tremendous impact on our day to day activities. Right from our purchases,billpayments,banking transactions to video chats with our near and dear one; who stays abroad became an easy and enjoyable experience. Before social media emerged in the country India has some strict regulations under the Indian Telegraph act1885 which provided protection from mischief and other social menace. Governmnet had right to confiscate licensed telegraphs and to order interception of messages is still existed. . But this provision is not sufficient to control crimes emerging from social media

However after the technological revolution in mobile phone industry things have changed drastically as virtual world has become a day to day affair for common man and public at a large. This gave rise to many complex issues which have directly influenced the social fabric of the society. Fake news, manipulative contents, obscene visuals, character assassination, fraudulent practices have surged immensely;The online media became a headache for the people and government authorities. This give rise to think of legal provisions to control such activities.

Social media in India
Spread of digital media in India has been so vast and far reaching that it has emerged as a front runner in the usage of social sites and applications.

If you look back and see the statistics in 2010, Facebook users in india were just 8million within six months timethe number doubled. With the entry of cheaper smart phones and inception of 3G services in India, the growth of internet users and thereby, adoption of Social Media sites boosted significantly in January ,2018 the figure was 291 million. Facebook has achieved impressive growth in India &USA since thebeginning of 2017, The new figureshighlighted that active users in India are growing more than twice as fast as they are in the US, (The Next Web reported.) But on the other side , social media penetration in India remains quiteinsignificant with just 19% of the country's total population using Facebook in June. That compares to 73% penetration in the US, and a global average of around 42%.

WhatsAp Users growth & trend
In May 2014, WhatsApp has 50 million monthly active users in India, which is also its largest country by the number of monthly active users. In October 2014, What'sApp crossed 70 million monthly active users in India, which is 10% of its total user base ,In February 2017, WhatsApp crossed 200 million monthly active users in India. WhatsApp is trusted by a sizeable population of the country. Those bent on inciting propaganda and rumours are likely to find a captive audience among this section of WhatsApp users.

As cost of mobile data is minimal and

smartphones are available for a throw away price, rural segment of WhatsApp and other social media platforms would continue to rise. The increase in use of WhatsApp was driven by continuous penetration of mobile internet and the reducing of data costs. The rise in internet access and WhatsApp penetration has been higher in metros and urban India than in rural India, but rural India is catching up fast according to live Mint,periodical dated 18th July,2018

Government Initiatives for curbing ills of social media

In the year 2009 Central government introduced amendments in information technology act of 2008. As per the provision in section 69 governments has got a right to intervene into social media posts,emails,and also intercepting voice calls . As per the report 9000 phone calls and 500 email messages were intercepted every month (ref-The times of india-23rd December,2018). Even social media like face book and twitter were also asked to furnish the information of suspicious posts.

Taking into consideration the rapid growth of social media worldwide and in India in particular Govt. of India came out with some legal provisions recently in July,2018to control What's ap messaging platform . WhatsApp has started having the five chat limit for forwards . . It was done to curb spread of fake like contents in news and misinformation on the platform. The Facebook-owned messaging app is being strictly monitored in India, after reliable reports came in. It was observed that viral video messages shared on the app resulted in lynchings, mob violence in some parts of the country.

Globally WhatsApp has a different rule, it restricts the number of forwards to 20 chats; in India it is 5 chats only. According to news agency IANS, Whatsap in India, has got a biggest market at 200 million users cannot afford to lose the clientele. . This new restriction had ensured that if a media message (video, photos, audio) is forwarded five times from the same account, then WhatsApp will disable the option for forwarding it further. WhatsApp has earlier revealed that India is the market where people forward more messages, photos and videos than any other country in the world.

The Information Technology Amendment Act, 2008 (IT Act 2008)has more strigent provisions to India's Information Technology Act (ITA-2000). The IT Amendment Act was passed by the Indian Parliament in October 2008 and came into force a year later. The Act is administered by the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In).

The original Act was developed to promote business related activities like e commerce, e wallet and to prevent cybercrime. The Act also intends to foster security practices within India that would serve the country in a global diaspora. The

Amendment was aimed at giving a comprehensive cover which was not there in a original bill. Now .Section 69, , authorizes the Indian government to intercept, monitor, decrypt and block data at its discretion., "The Act has provided Indian government with the power of strict monitoring and blocking data of any kind.

and safety here are some of the major instances reported in the recent past. In September 2015, a man named Akhlaq was lynched in Dadri of Uttar Pradesh over rumors about cooking cow meat. His killing was a sensational news iitem in indian media. Violence- statistics.
About 22 people have been killed by

*user worldwide in 2018	users in india2018
Internet- 4.021billion (7&rise each year) Social media- 3.196billions(13%rise each year) Cell phone-5,135billion(4%rise per year) Smart phone users-2.5billions Number of active users 2.92billions	775.5 million 226.06million 344.55million 337million(16%growth) 452million

In addition to this the following statistics reflects impact of social media across the globe
1)*Mobile is the most popular device having 52%penatration compared to other devices like computers which have 43% share only.
4) *Social media daily active users most Facebook There is a 10.7% average post reach vs page like and 26.8% average paid post reach vs total reach.
Social Media penetration in India - December 2018
Facebook89.77% YouTube4.06%
Pinterest2.64% Instagram1.54%
Twitter1.42%
Google+0.21%
Inspite of these efforts and legal provisions Social media turned out to be a matter of concern for social peace

mobs since May 10 on the suspicion of being child-lifters or involved in cow realted crimes in different parts of the country. Police have blamed rumour mongers and fake messages spread through social media for the lynchings.

HIGHLIGHTS
16 cases of lynching have been reported in 2 months
22 people have been killed in incidents of lynching
Police blame rumor mongering on social media for lynchings.
July 1, Maharashtra

The five people killed by villagers in Maharashtra's Dhule district were suspected to be from a gang of child lifters. Police revealed that there were

rumours for the few days on social media that a gang of child lifters was active in the area.

On the same fateful day a mentally challenged woman was tied to a pole and tortured by a villagers in Assam's Sonitpur district, suspecting her to be a criminal &child-lifter. Two migrant labourers survived a similar attempt in Chennai in that period only. They were thrashed by a mob on suspicion of being child-lifters.

June 28-29, Tripura

3 incidents of lynching cases were reported from Tripura - all on the suspicion of being child-lifters. The incidents took place in three districts of Tripura. The victims were a woman, a hawker from Uttar Pradesh and a man hired by the Tripura government to fight rumour mongering.

Following the incidents of lynching, Tripura DGP AK Shuklareported, "It has been noticed that SMS, What's App and social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are being widely used for transmission of fake images and videos as well as text messages which have potential to incite violence in the state at a larger rate."

June 26, Gujarat

A 40-year-old woman was beaten to death by a mob of around 30 people in Ahmedabad on the suspicion of being a child-lifter. In another case, a 45-year-old woman was assaulted in Suratfor child lifting.

June 22, Chhattisgarh

An unidentified man was allegedly beaten to death by a mob in Chhattisgarh's Sarguja district. The attackers suspected the victim to be a child- lifter.The man had arrived at the Mendrakla village, where he was lynched, only hours earlier. Police report says thatrumours about a gang of child-lifters swirling in the area is the reason for the crime. .

June 19, Uttar Pradesh

A man was lynched in Hapur district of Uttar Pradesh following rumours of cow slaughter. Police initially denied the cow slaughter angle. But later videos surfaced purportedly showing a mob beating up a man and forcing him to confess to having slaughtered a cow.The incident was an outcome of cow slaughter. The lynching also went viral on social media.

June 13, West Bengal

A man was lynched in West Bengal's Malda district on suspicion of being a child-lifter. He was tied to an electric post and beaten to death.

June 8, Assam

Two men were lynched in Assam's KarbiAnglong district on June 8. Victims identified as Nilotpal Das and AbhijeetNath. They were stopped by a group of villagers at Panjuri on their way back and lynched. More than 70 persons were arrested by Assam Police for murder and spreading rumours on social media.

June 8, Maharashtra

Two men were beaten to death by a mob in Maharashtra, district Aurangabad. Police said that the lynching was happened due to fake messages in circulation on WhatsApp. The villagers attacked the victims on suspicion of being robbers.

May 28, Andhra Pradesh

A transgender was lynched by a frenzymob of over 500 people on suspicion of being part of a child-lifting gang. The incident took place in the old Hyderabad city. Police said that transgender had come to Hyderabad from Mahbubnagar district during Ramzan. They were seen begging in the old city area.

At the same time, a message had gone viral on social media claiming that Pardhi gang was active in Hyderabad. It claimed that the members of the gang were kidnapping children and killing them to harvest their organs.

May 25, Karnataka

A mob lynched a 26-year-young man on the suspicion of child-lifting. The video of lynching did circulatedon social media showing the victim being dragged by a group of people in the streets of Bengaluru's Chamrajpet area. Police said that rumours were doing rounds on social media about a gang of child-lifters being active in Bengaluru.

May 24, Telangana

Two unfortunate incidents of mob lynching were reported from Telangana on May 24 -- one each from Nizamabad and Yadadri districts. They were killed on the suspicion of being child kidnappers as messages were being circulated on WhatsApp.

The man killed in Nizamabad was there to meet a relative but got nervous when he was confronted by a mob. His appeal and clarification did not satisfy a uncontrollable mob and was lynched.

May 10-11, Tamil Nadu

Two cases of lynching were reported within a span of 24 hours in Tamil Nadu. In the first case, a man was tortured to death and hung from a bridge in Pulicat on suspicion that he was a man behind the child lifting crime. In the other incident, a 60-year-old woman wasassaulted for giving "foreign chocolates" to children in Tiruvannamalai district.

Tamil Nadu police said that fake messages circulating on WhatsApp led to the twin-lynching. The messages asked the locals not to trust immigrants claiming that they were a part of child-lifting gang.These incidents reported in the country have clearly indicated the role of social media and its misuse in the ghastly acts & violence.

Government Initiative after these incidents

The government of India has authorized 10 investigative and intelligence

agencies to "intercept, monitor and decrypt" all information on any computer device in the country. A Gazette of India notification to this effect was issued on December 20, 2018. The Gazette of India is a legal document that carries information about changes to law or new laws and orders.

The ten agencies that have been authorized to intercept, monitor and decrypt "any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer resource" include Major intelligence agencies like internal spy body Intelligence Bureau and external intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing has been given the responsibilities .In addition following agnecies would also help to detect crimes that's include .the Narcotics Control Board ,Enforcement Directorate (which deals with economic crimes), the Central Board of Direct Taxes (whichmonitor income taxregulatios), the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (Looks after revnue earned illegally) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (social and economical crimes).The National Investigation Agency, which focuses on probing terrorism-related incidents, the Delhi Police and the Directorate of Signal Intelligence have also been given the powers to intercept, monitor and decrypt any communication made through devices of social media in the country.

In the progressive mode Govt has come out with a proposed amendment draft to curb the misuse more effec-

tively.

The government has sought public response &feedback on the proposed amendments to the Information Technology (IT) Act that intends to make it mandatory for platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter to trace "originator" of "unlawful" information, while also removing such content within 24 hours' time after being communicated

It pointed out that a number of lynching incidents were reported in 2018 mostly due to fake news being circulated through What'sapp and other social media sites.WhatsApp, FB will be asked to drop the 'unlawful' content underthe new set of prposed rules.

Some key suggestions of the IT [Intermediaries Guidelines (Amendment) Rules] 2018

Give information sought by any govt. agency within 72 hours

Enable tracing the originator of information on these platforms

Disable access to unlawful acts within 24 hours of being notified

Arrangement of automated tools to identify and disable access to unlawful content

Report cyber security incidents with the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team

However government is not in a mood and intends to control social media activities of general public. On the background of lynching incidents and violent outburst reported in the year 2018 mostly due to misin-

formation and making it viral through WhatsApp and other social media sites, Government all set to take up these challenges by tightening lawful weapons to control the social media criminals. To have vigilance on terrorist,removing obscene contents and making social media a healthy and fear free platform is a need of an hour.

The present set of laws and regulations and people movement would definitely helpful for Making social media ambience a true platform for freedom of expression and exchange.

Observations & conclusions

1)India is no,2 after Saudi Arabia in Social media penetration and global increase.

2) Growth of smart phones in India is accelerating; it is on no2 afterChina

3) 22%population is using smart-phone in India Out of which 35%young people in the age group of 18to 36are using smart phones.

4) Availability of data at cheap rates boosted use of Facebook&what's ap

4) Most of the incidents of mob violence were due to rumor mongering

5) Majority of the casesthatwere reported due to fear psychosis

6) Child lifter gang is kidnapping children was the major rumor in all these incidents followed cow slaughtering suspicions.

7) The culprits are victim of superstitions due to lack of education and social backwardness.

8) Indian people lacks the understanding of proper use of socialmedia.Penetration and growth of mobile phones have made this problem more complex.

9) There are limitations in curbing social media

10) Proper education within the house, school , peer group and creating awareness amongst all users can only control the situation.

11) A need for organizing Media literacy drives by media schools and social organizations,

12) The results of these developments have been visible as on December26th, 2018 NIA arrested 10 persons likely to be terrorists with the help of messages of social media.

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