



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution- Non-Commercial-Share Alike 4.0 International (CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0) License, which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium provided the original work is properly cited.

---

## **SOCIAL MEDIA AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH**

*Yashi Agarwal*

We hear social media and the platforms that pop into our minds are Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter(X). What is social media? It is not just a platform for entertainment but to share ideas, opinions, spread awareness through text, image, videos and other features. It connects billions of people together across the world. Earlier, people mainly depended on newspapers, television, and radio to receive information and updates, but today social media has made communication and access to information much easier and faster. Over the years, social media has faced both appreciation and criticism. Some people see it as a powerful tool to communicate, express, share ideas, thoughts and meaningful information whereas others focus on negative impacts such as misinformation, cyberbullying, mental pressure, unethical social standards. For today's generation, social media is inseparable in their daily life, where checking notifications and messages is often the first thing people do in the morning. While social media provides individuals with the freedom to express their thoughts and opinions openly also it is easy to get updates, but it also raises important questions about responsibility, online behaviour, and the balance between freedom of speech and its positive as well as negative impact on society.

Freedom of speech is the fundamental human right to express ideas, thoughts, opinions and information without unnecessary interference or fear of retaliation. It also helps to form independent opinions and ideas and allows individuals easy access to information anywhere at any time. Article 19(1)(a) of the constitution of India talks about the Freedom to express opinions, views, and beliefs via speech, writing etc. including right to silence<sup>1</sup>. The freedom of expression is not absolute and also comes with the restrictions which are mentioned under Article 19(2) of Indian constitution allows the government to impose restrictions on freedom

---

<sup>1</sup> INDIA CONST. art. 19, cl. 1(a)

of speech in the interests of sovereignty, integrity of India, security of the state, morality<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, balancing free expression with accountability and ethical behaviour becomes necessary in the digital age.

Social media has so many positive impacts in our lives it helps us to gather information globally more easily and quickly. It becomes very important for today's generation to share their ideas, thoughts and the things which they feel are difficult to express and social media gives them an accessible platform. For educational purposes, social media is used in a most innovative way<sup>3</sup>. Most of the students feel scared to share their ideas in the classroom but they prefer to share them on social media and use platforms like Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook etc. social media also is getting popularity in field of business, fashion, marketing ,and entrepreneurship .social networks build on community concepts sometimes it gives you a chance to connect with your old friends and allow individuals to make new friends within your interest communities<sup>4</sup> . Social media has now evolved into a digital public sphere where individuals openly participate in discussions, exchange ideas, and express their opinions freely<sup>5</sup>. These opportunities show how social media has become an important platform where people exercise their freedom of speech and express themselves openly.

While social media offers several positive opportunities, its negative impacts cannot be ignored. Today's generation because of social media lose their ability to communicate people face to face<sup>6</sup>. Many writes and blogger post the wrong information on social media which leads the education system to failure. Excessive use of social media negatively affects mental health by creating feeling of depression, anxiety especially young people<sup>7</sup>. Social media often creates unrealistic standards of beauty, success and lifestyle which may lead young people compare themselves creates mental pressure<sup>8</sup>. Sometimes, freedom of speech used on social

---

<sup>2</sup> INDIA CONST. art. 19, cl. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Shabnoor Siddiqui & Tajinder Singh, Social Media: Its Impact with Positive and Negative Aspects, 5 INT'L J. COMPUTER APPLICATIONS TECH. & RSCH. 71 (2016), <https://www.ijcat.com>.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Vijay Kumar Grover, Social Media: An Educational Tool, Opportunities and Challenges, 3 INT'L J. INNOVATIVE RSCH. & GUIDES 272, Issue 2 (Feb. 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Francisco Segado-Boj & Jesús Díaz-Campo, social media and Its Intersections with Free Speech, Freedom of Information and Privacy: An Analysis, 18 ICONO14 231 (2020).

<sup>6</sup> Shabnoor Siddiqui & Tajinder Singh, Social Media: Its Impact with Positive and Negative Aspects, 5 INT'L J. COMPUTER APPLICATIONS TECH. & RSCH. 71 (2016), <https://www.ijcat.com>.

<sup>7</sup> Oluwatosin Esther Ajewumi et al., The Impact of Social Media on Mental Health and Well-Being, 24 WORLD J. ADVANCED RSCH. & REVS. 107 (2024).

<sup>8</sup> Oluwatosin Esther Ajewumi et al., The Impact of Social Media on Mental Health and Well-Being, 24 WORLD J. ADVANCED RSCH. & REVS. 107 (2024).

media to spread fake news, rumours and misinformation. Many of the people seek validation through the likes, comments and share which creates so much mental pressure. Cyberbullying is also one of the major negative impacts of social media because many people use the platforms to insult, threaten and to harass people. Therefore, the freedom of speech should be exercised responsibly and ethically to avoid harming others.

In today's world, it has become important to maintain a balance between the freedom of speech and responsible social media usage. Freedom of speech gives individuals the right to express opinions openly, but this freedom should not be misused to spread hate, misinformation, or online harassment. As we see the most important case related to this is *Shreya Singhal V. Union of India*, the supreme court emphasized the importance of freedom of speech on the internet and stated the online expression should be protected while maintaining responsible and ethical communication<sup>9</sup>. Parents and schools should educate students about responsible social media usage. Digital literacy programs should be introduced that can educate students. Users should verify information before sharing it online. The balance is important to create a safe space and healthy digital environment.

In conclusion, social media become an inseparable part of modern life and plays an important role to express ideas. While it has positive and negative impacts. Therefore, it is important for people to use social media responsibly and ethically with respecting other's opinions. In today's world the real challenge is not having freedom of speech but also understanding how to use that freedom wisely. In today's digital age, how can individuals balance freedom of speech with responsible social media usage? Do you believe social media has a more positive or negative impact on society and today's generation?

---

<sup>9</sup> *Shreya Singhal v. Union of India*, (2015) 5 S.C.C. 1 (India).