

# Role of Social Media in Inculcating Moral-Ethical Values

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**Abstract:** *Man being a social animal spends all his life span in society. While living in society he has to abide by certain rules and regulations enforced by that particular society. The life of all human beings in all societies depends heavily on the fulfilment of the value system of society. As these sets of values vary from society to society and culture to culture so there is found to be great gap between the moral ethical values in oriental societies and those of occidental societies. What is valued most in India may not have any weightage at all in western society. In fact, traditional societies have more stringent social taboos which determine the moral value system of society. It is true that ICT induced media has broken all the man-made and geographical boundaries and the world has been reduced to a 'Global Village'. Social Media plays a prominent role in bringing the people closer to each other. It is therefore the duty of social media to cater to and become the custodian of moral-ethical values of society. Undoubtedly, with the advent of intercultural and transnational communication, traditional values will give way to new sets of values but being the carrier of values it is the sacred duty of media to ensure that the spirit of old value system remains intact.*

**Key Words:** *Culture, Oriental, values, custodian, intercultural.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Social Media play an important role in honing the human values among the social media users living in every nook and corner of the World. One comes across a plethora of images, pictures and videos on various social media apps but all of them are neither worth reading or worth watching. Philanthropists around the world are worried about abundance of user-generated content available on Social Networking Sites. It is true that every society and nation has a distinctive culture and set of human-moral-cultural values which determine the moral-ethical values of that society. It is true that after the advent of Globalisation in early 90's, the world has converted into a 'Global Village'. Hence, this trans-nationalisation has resulted in the formation of new sets of values. While traditional values are giving way to the modern ones, one feels social values have been windswept and moral values have become fragmented. Children are the most affected lot. While youngsters feel proud in affiliating themselves to western value system, the old generation is left lamenting over the erosion of age-old value system. In the absence of any rules and regulations governing Social Media, it has become a platform which is open for anyone and everyone to post his uncensored newsfeed and reactions. This chapter aims at the need and necessity of value formation on Social Media.

## 2. DISCUSSION:

There are plenty of communication theories which deal with the powerful effects of media. While Bullet Theory often regarded as Hypodermic Needle Model and Stalagmite theory emphasis the role and effect of media more so mass media. There is another important theory known as 'Cultivation Theory'. Developed by George Gerbner this theory treats the mass media as one of the standard agencies of socialization, rivaling the role of parents and the family, peer-groups, teachers and religious authorities, and social norms operating within the community and national culture. (Singh, Balbir). Singh further emphasizes that socialization is a multidimensional process involving the acquisition of knowledge, attitudes and values. Cultivation theory suggests that frequency of exposure to the mass media, especially television viewing, leads towards the internalization of its messages. Mass Media has the capacity to cast its spell on the audience and influence their vulnerable minds. While doing so, it becomes imperative for media to inculcate moral-ethical values among people. Regular exposure to messages conveyed by mass communications have cumulative effect on moral values and behavior of people. with a particularly influential role upon impressionable young children and adolescents during The formative years of adolescents are of great importance as this is known as the period of transition to adulthood.

Singh further adds in his study that Social media was made possible by web based technologies, which were used to turn communication into interactive dialogue among communities and individuals. It has also been described as an interactive mechanism on the internet. Social Networking Sites are replete with user generated uncensored raw content which allures the youngsters more than others. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), defined social media as a group of internet based application that allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content. In his own contribution views social media as social instruments of communication are different from the conventional media. They are online

content, created by people using highly accessible and a scalable publishing technologies to disseminate information across the world. Here people are the creators, disseminators and consumers of information available on internet. The feature of making the people information producers and consumers is one of the distinguishing features of social media from traditional mass media that only make the people consumers only (Adelabu, 2011). A national poll conducted in 2017 reported that more than 70 percent of Americans are very or somewhat worried that popular culture, as portrayed in television and movies, is lowering moral standards in the United States. The same stands true about Indian users. A study conducted by Dr. Bajwa on the social media using habits of university students revealed that more than 60 percent youngsters studying in different universities in North India have become heavy users of social media i.e. they spend more than 6 hours per day on social media.

Social Media has certainly cast its spell and the whole world seems to be spell bound. With billions of users, Social Media has not only made its presence felt but it has brought about significant changes in the life styles and living patterns of society. As Marshal McLuhan once put it in the context of Television, the TV audience can be broadly categorised as Heavy Viewers and Light Viewers. As per his classification of audience, people who devote more than four hours in watching television are called Heavy Viewers. Even a cursory look into the smart phone using habits around us, one may come across many who devote more than 8-10 hours of their quality time on their smart phones. They remain busy in going through the feed on their Social Media accounts on various Social Networking Sites. Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snap Chat etc. have been found to be immensely popular among people of all generations. Social Media has changed the communication patterns of society. Inter-personal communication has been decreasing day by day and virtual communication is rapidly taking its place. One may say that people are sacrificing the 'actual' for the sake of 'virtual'. They have developed a tendency of ignoring those who live around them and keep themselves in regular communication with those who are in their contact through Social Networking Sites. It is found in some studies that Social Media users, mostly those between 15-35, spend more than FIVE years on Social Media. They have multiple accounts and they attach great significance to their mates on Social Media. It is a matter of surprise and astonishment that an increasing number of people are getting interested in their 'virtual friends'.

There seems to be an endless and unbridled competition among social networking sites users to get more and more likes to their newsfeed. They remain hyperactive on Social Media while posting their filtered photographs and selfies regularly on Social Media. They may delay taking their lunch but never fail to click a selfie at their lunch table to be posted on Facebook. By the time they finish their lunch, they have already succeeded in getting a sufficient number of 'likes' and 'comments' for their newsfeed. In fact, a sort of barter system exists there. 'Like my newsfeed and get yours liked in return' seems to be the motto. Psychologists opine that the very idea of clicking 'selfie' is the product of a socially alienated person who has developed a false sense of getting noticed at Social Media sites. They indulge in self-glorification. Such habits are found common among youngsters and the 'matured adults' alike. The craze for being online is so much prevalent among users that they find one or the other way of remaining online or having a look at the newsfeed even while at job. That is precisely why many private entrepreneurs have disallowed the usage of mobile phones during working hours. People often prefer ignoring their friends and near and dear ones for the sake of 'virtual friends'. They remain busy on Social Media till late night. In fact, they have developed a sort of 'addiction' for Social Media. They have developed a tendency of checking their smart phones to ensure that they don't miss single beep of the arrival of message. They also know the futility of such messages but they attach great importance to such posts. It is a matter of concern that this 'addiction' is on the rise.

When people develop such unrestrained infatuation for some media and media in turn starts affecting their life-styles, moral-ethical values take a nose dive. Human values are a set of attributes considered to be significant to the people of that community. Culture also goes a long way in determining the value system of a society. Values are our guidelines for our success - our paradigm about what is acceptable. Human behaviour depends on the characters defining the identity, choosing the values and establishing the beliefs. Human values includes morals, integrity, peaceful life, respecting others, honesty, caring, kindness, courage, sharing, time management, co-operation, self-confidence, commitment and spirituality etc. which focus on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility. The five human values Love, Peace, Truth, Right Conduct and Non-violence are inherent in every human being. They are the perennial streams which alone can provide sustenance to the nurturing of these societal values in young minds.

In ethics, value denotes the degree of importance of some thing or action, with the aim of determining what actions are best to do or what way is best to live, or to describe the significance of different actions. Often primary values are strong and secondary values are suitable for changes. What makes an action valuable may in turn depend on the ethical values of the objects it increases, decreases or alters. It needs to be debated upon whether some values that are not clearly physiologically determined, such as altruism, are intrinsic, and whether some, such as acquisitiveness, should be classified as vices or virtues.

According to information available on Wikipedia personal values exist in relation to cultural values, either in agreement with or divergence from prevailing norms. A culture is a social system that shares a set of common values, in which such values permit social expectations and collective understandings of the good, beautiful and constructive.

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Personal values exist in relation to cultural values, either in agreement with or divergence from prevailing norms. A culture is a social system that shares a set of common values, in which such values permit social expectations and collective understandings of the good, beautiful and constructive. Without normative personal values, there would be no cultural reference against which to measure the virtue of individual values and so cultural identity would disintegrate. Such values provide an internal reference for what is good, beneficial, important, useful, beautiful, desirable and constructive. Personal values are those which people find important in their day-to-day lives. They are self-respect, warm relationships, sense of accomplishment, self-fulfillment, fun and enjoyment, excitement, sense of belonging, being well respected, and security. From a functional aspect these values are categorized into three and they are interpersonal relationship area, personal factors, and non-personal factors. Though the core values are related, the processing of values can differ based on the cultural identity of an individual.

Individual cultures emphasize values which their members broadly share. Values of a society can often be identified by examining the level of honour and respect received by various groups and ideas. Values relate to the norms of a culture, but they are more global and intellectual than norms. Norms provide rules for behaviour in specific situations, while values identify what should be judged as good or evil. While norms are standards, patterns, rules and guides of expected behaviour, values are abstract concepts of what is important and worthwhile. Flying the national flag on a holiday is a norm, but it reflects the value of patriotism. While wearing red Lehnga-choli or Ghagra stand for marriage, wearing dark clothing and appearing solemn are normative behaviours to manifest respect at a funeral in the West. Different cultures represent values differently and to different levels of emphasis. Someone has rightly said that over the last three decades, traditional-age college students have shown an increased interest in personal well-being and a decreased interest in the welfare of others. Values seemed to have changed, affecting the beliefs, and attitudes of the young generation.

In the words of RG Ratnawat, human values are most so important that people are ready to sacrifice almost anything to live with their values. Honesty, integrity, love and happiness are some of the end values or destination values that human beings seek to attain, practise and live with. On the other hand, values such as health, money, fame, status, intelligence etc. are the means values or path values which help achieve the end values. The end values and the means values are also known as terminal values and instrumental values respectively. While the end values are constant, and guide us to achieve the higher order goals, means values are temporary in nature and help us achieve comparatively lower-order goals. Ratnawat further adds that value system comprises both sets of values which are developed and reinforced through the culture in which they grow on one side and the environment on the other. Socialisation from parents, religious institutions, friends, personal experiences, and society contribute to the formation of values in individuals. The individual values are affected by our belief system, prevailing social systems, and to some extent socio-economic conditions. The terminal values are formed over the years, whereas the instrumental values are determined by situations.

Press (read Mass Media) is regarded as the fourth pillar of democracy. It is an established fact that the responsibility of inculcating moral-ethical values among children rests with mothers and other elderly people in the families. This system worked wonders when joint family system was in vogue. But with the arrival of nuclear family system the parents have little or no time for their children who are often left at the mercy of maids. Mass media has become quite popular in the era of Globalization. But the arrival of social media has pushed all other forms of mass media to the margins. Billions of users of social media stand as witness that it has gained immense popularity all over the world. Hence, the onus of inculcating moral-ethical and human values among youth now lies with the social media. Moral development in children has been following a predictable developmental path. Children used to judge their actions as wrong or incorrect when they result in punishment or violated the family norms. As children mature, they begin to consider multiple perspectives in a situation, taking into account the intentions and motives of those involved and recognizing the often-conflicting rules inherent in moral dilemmas. In other words, their moral reasoning becomes more flexible.

### 3. CONCLUSION:

It is evident from the above discussion that social media has grabbed the center-stage and, of late, it has become the necessity and weakness of present day man. People find it difficult to lead a life without social media. In fact, it has become the alpha and omega of the lives of young generation. Everybody agrees that this internet oriented media depends heavily on uncensored user-generated content the authenticity of which is always questionable. But there cannot be two opinions that despite numerous shortcomings, social media is here to stay. This media is omnipotent and the newsfeed on such sites goes viral in no time. Its omnipotence demands that it must shoulder the responsibility of inculcating moral-ethical values in its users. People may debate that such values are culture and society specific but

they all agree that the latent purpose of moral-ethical values all over the world is to induce human values amongst citizens. Social media can play a vital role in disseminating moral-ethical-human values in its users. Though the absence of regulatory bodies has rendered it unbridled till date yet it cannot shy away from its moral duty.

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