

Editorial

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Beware, there are legal provisions for misusing Social Media

From trivia to disasters, information reaches people as it happens and is keeping them engaged like never before. But how they express or react thereafter, makes social media a double-edged sword.

Some few days back, an eight years old young girl find hopes after her story went viral on social networking site facebook. For reason best known to the almighty, both her kidney reportedly failed and her parents had end up every penny left with them even by selling their land. Her mother wanted to give live to her daughter but was helpless as they have no money for the transplant. The story was reported in a local cable TV and then later it was uploaded at Facebook. It took only some few hours to receive hundreds of response from the people. Many donated whatever amount they have and finally Rotary club too extended all support for her kidney transplant. Such was a wonderful contribution by social networking sites.

Just a day back, a person uploaded a video with hate speech trying to spread create tension among various communities in the state. It was regarding the vandalism by volunteers of an organization to illegal vendors which refused to shift from the site. It takes less than 24 hour to arrest him by Cyber Crime unit of the state police.

Another person was also reported to be arrested by police team for abusing and threatening to kill the son of the Chief Minister of Manipur.

In 2012, one of the early cases of misuse of social media came to the government's attention, when morphed pictures and videos of earthquake victims began to go viral on social media. Miscreants were morphing these images to show that these were Muslim victims of civil riots in Assam and Burma. This was done to provoke further riots by vested interests and it did bring a reaction.

The social media space was soon full of hate and revenge messages against Hindu migrants living in South India, which spread panic and soon there was mass exodus of people from the North East, who were forced to return back to Assam and other Northeastern states. This was a clear example of the negative side of social media which helped in stoking mass hysteria in a very short time.

At the individual level, social media is full of examples where a relationship gone sour results in one of the partners uploading intimate pictures, videos or information, in revenge against their former partners. Whatever the subsequent legal consequences, the damage to the victim's reputation is instant and in some cases, results in fatal consequences.

Another fallout of social media is the evolution of all types and genres of porn and its easy access by minors, which is resulting in rapidly changing social behaviour and redefining morality, especially amongst the younger generation. With more people participating in porn and even greater numbers accessing it, the opportunity to make easy money is unfortunately helping the industry grow rapidly, on the back of social media. The society can neither do away with it nor ignore it.

Now what people using social networking site should understand is that there are certain act who misuse the platform with criminal intention.

As per the Section 66 A of the IT Act -

"Any person who sends, by means of a computer resource or a communication device (a) any information that is grossly offensive or has menacing character; or (b) any information which he knows to be false, but for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience, danger, obstruction, insult, injury, criminal intimidation, enmity, hatred or ill will, persistently by making use of such computer resource or a communication device, (c) any electronic mail or electronic mail message for the purpose of causing annoyance or inconvenience or to deceive or to mislead the addressee or recipient about the origin of such messages, shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years and with fine."

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Educating Children in Democracy



The climate of school life and the dynamics of human relations are potent factors in what students learn about the way of life and the values which direct their interpersonal relations, possibly even greater factors than what the school explicitly teaches about democratic human relations. Learning experiences in schools make or mar the growth of democratic human relations. Since children are the future citizens and the success of democracy depends on their ability, both children and democracy are inter-related and inter-dependent. On April 26, 1936 at the opening of the 4th Whitehouse Conference, President F.D. Roosevelt (1939) said, "Definitely we are here with a principal objective of considering the relationship between a successful democracy and the children who form an integral part of that democracy. We no longer set them apart from democracy as if they were a segregated group. They are one with democracy, because they are dependent upon democracy and democracy is dependent on them". As mentioned already, education is not a preparation for life, education itself is life and school is not the replica of society, school itself is society. At present, most of our schools are divorced from the society and the conditions prevalent in the schools are adverse to the growth of democracy. Dewey has, therefore suggested that the school itself should be made "a genuine form of active community life" instead of a place for merely imparting lessons. A society is to him a number of people held together because they are working along common lines in a common spirit and with common aims. Preparation of Pupils for democracy has been a long-time goal of schools in many developed nations have used their educational systems to train individuals to uphold the values of the society and to acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to perpetuate these values. This process has been an important part of Education for democracy which has been stimulated by the two world wars, the conflict between democracy and totalitarianism or communism and the tensions arising out of other great social and political changes.

We may ask what is education for democracy? No precise meaning has emerged so far to have commonly accepted usage. In one sense we may call it citizenship education concerned with the right and duties of the good citizen in a democratic society. In a longer sense, it is concerned with the moral, ethical, social, political and economic aspects of life. Democracy is of slow growth and to succeed, it must be a living plant rising from a favourite soil and nourished by suitable air, water and light through a long procession of years. Education for democracy involves not only knowledge, but also deep understanding, skills, attitudes and interests. It cannot be taught like algebra or carpentry, but has to be practiced fitness. Citizens are made, not born. As has been mentioned earlier, the task of education for citizenship in a totalitarian country is comparatively easy. The leaders in such a state have their own ideas and they know the methods of translating them into reality. The individuals are regarded as cogs in the machine and the instruments of the State, as means and not an end. They are easily dictated, directed and even conditioned by the totalitarian rulers and leaders. In a democracy the task is however, much more complex and difficult both on account of two reasons. Firstly, the individual is upheld above the society i.e., State and Society exist for the individual, and not the vice versa. Secondly, although the individual is taken to be a social being with various social obligations, it is quite impossible to draw up a blue-print of the ideal democratic society.

Education for Citizenship

Education for citizenship begins in the family which is the first and most enduring nursery of the good citizens. The democratic values like tolerance, self-abnegation, fell feeling etc, are likely to be inculcated in the young children in the family, perfect balance is struck between the needs of the individual and the demands of the social group. Every individual learns to adjust and harmonies his own unique interests and needs to those of the other family members. The family being a small social unity, the young children can easily understand their position "and realise their rights and obligations in an adequate manner. Thus as a simple miniature society, family provides invaluable learning experience for democratic living in future. The foundations laid in the family should be consolidated in the school. The democratic experiences should be deepened, enriched and expanded to the wider circles. Narrow loyalty of the family life has had to broaden into wider loyalty of the larger, more complex a more impersonal community. There may be difficulties in striking a happy balance between the needs of the individual and those of the community. But the child learns has to make necessary adjustment through give and take and a sort of compromise. D'Souza (1963) has rightly observed:

"Every school has a dual function to perform to train the child to be a good citizen of the school community, and to prepare him, as fully as possible, for the wider society into which he will enter on leaving school and as a member of which he will have to live, move and have his being, schools must cease to be ivory to were isolated from the life of the community, they must realise that they are an integral part of the community, and that their raison d'etre is not only to develop the individual to his maximum capacity, but to realise him so that he will use his talents and abilities in the service of this community, his country and the whole world".

It has already been said that education for citizenship cannot be taught like any other school subjects. It does not deal only at an intellectual level; it implies a number of suitable skills, attitudes and interests besides knowledge and understanding. Therefore, education for democracy should not be identified with a course of civics. Sir Richard Livingstone (1943), has rightly said, "Citizenship is not information or intellectual information, though these are a part of it; it is conduct not theory, action not knowledge science without being a good citizen. Thus a mere theoretical knowledge of his rights and duties as a citizen will not make child a good citizen. This knowledge may be a foundation, upon which pupils' life and experiences, his attitudes and interests should be developed in an intensive as well as ever-widening sphere".

The curricular and the co-curricular activities should be organised in the schools in such

manner that real experience in democratic living can be provided to the child. The best way of imparting citizenship education to children is to provide every opportunity for learning the rights and responsibilities, joys and sufferings of democratic living. John Dewey has, therefore, insisted that the school should be an epitome of the society. Every school as far as possible should be a democracy in miniature giving children as large a share in the management of their own affairs as they capable of and providing as much learning experiences as possible in citizenship. It is definite that only a democratic education can be able to produce democratic citizens. Since India has adopted the democratic way of living, she will be able to achieve her end only through the participation of her citizens who are expected to possess the desired qualities of a democratic citizen. "Citizenship in democracy" in the words of the Secondary Education Commission, (1953) "is a very exacting and challenging responsibility for which every citizen has to be carefully trained. It involves many intellectual, social and moral qualities which cannot be expected to grow of their own accord. The assumption of this innate "worthfulness of the individual" is most significant from the point of view of democratic education which intends the fall, all-round development of every individual's personality. This implies that education should take into account all his needs psychological, social, emotional and practical and cater to all of them. This basic concept transcends the narrow academic approach and broadens into an education for living, i.e., an education to initiate the students into the many-added aspects of living in a community. Our democracy harbours so many races and religions, castes and communities. Our democracy harbours so many races and religions, castes and communities. A healthy development of democratic education will ameliorate the difficulties and difference arising out of such diversities. It is aptly observed by the above Commission (1953), "No education is worth the name which does not inculcate the qualities necessary for living graciously, harmoniously and efficiently with one's fellowmen. Amongst the qualities which should be cultivated for this purpose are discipline, co-operation, social sensitiveness and tolerance. Each one of them has its own special part to play in humanising and socialising the personality".

These qualities are the democratic values which will enable children "to adopt democracy, not only as a form of Government but also as a way of life". This can convert the differences of languages, cultural pattern, religion, etc., into the warp and woof of a very rich and rewarding social and cultural life. The Education Commission (1996) have therefore suggested:

"We have to cultivate a spirit of large-hearted tolerance, of mutual give and take, of the appreciation of ways in which people differ from one another. This is a very exacting, experiment in living that we have launched".

In short, democratic education is itself a living experiment which is not only exacting, but also challenging. The National Policy on Education, 1986 has also visualised a common core curriculum for the entire country which will consist of values inter alia democracy to be inculcated in all pupils the future citizens of the nation.

Democratisation of Education

With a view to providing democratic education the entire educational system-philosophy, organisation, methodology, administration, management and so on, have to be geared to the desired objectives and oriented to the principle of democracy. This is called democratisation of education and it with the spirit of democracy. The above point has been very strongly and clearly put a cross by the International Commission of the Development of Education (1972) when they laid down that anticipating the advent of democracy to the world of education is not an illusion. It may not be perfect democracy, but when has this over existed? Yet it will at least be a real concrete, practical democracy, not inspired and built by bureaucrats or technocrats, or granted by some ruling caste, it will be living, creative and evolving. For this to be achieved social structures must be changed and the privileges built into our cultural heritage must be reduced. Educational structures must be remodelled, to extend widely the field of choice and enable the people to follow the principle of life-long education. Subject matter must be individualised pupils and students must be aware of their status their rights and their own wishes; authoritarian forms of teaching must give way to relationship marked by independence, mutual responsibility and dialogue; pedagogical training must be geared to knowing and respecting the multiple aspects of human personality; guidance must replace selection; those making use of educational institutions must participate their management and policy-making, the bureaucratic aspects of educational activity must be broken down and its administration decentralised. Equal access to education with equal opportunity and broad access to education with democracy in education are the keynote to democratisation of education. Democratising education does not only mean giving more education to more people, but also involving more people in educational management. Traditional education is failing to adapt itself to the needs of the growing number of people. It must be recreated. But who will do it? Not the administrators in education, but the people, all of them. They know their own needs and aspirations best.