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# Smartphones & Political Communication: Making Sense of the Political Forwarded Posts & Memes in the Online Space among Urban Youth of Pune

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## ABSTRACT

*The image of the internet has shifted radically since the late 1990s. It was termed cyberspace. Space plays a crucial role in our everyday life including leisure, work and especially for privacy. The Internet space is particularly (privately) popular among urban youth globally. The twenty-first century's digital revolution is proliferated by the consumption of smartphones and the wireless mobile internet. The urban 'digital natives' operate in the digitally networked ecosystems as human actors. The research paper is a part of a doctoral thesis; a qualitative exploration of 49 college-going respondents of urban Pune, about their social media usage, reasons, and perceptions about their meaning-making of the political content and forwarded post-politics in the context of social media use. The paper also explores the city locality and mobile internet usage among youth in Pune. Caste (ism) and religious tensions are the main content and the driving force.*

## INTRODUCTION

Social media content is triggered through the proliferation of mobile internet and smartphones. Multiple users can create, share and post multiple social, political and cultural memes with a variety of contexts and intentions. India is a multilingual, multicultural country. \*A report published by Reuters on 27th May 2024 authored by Vijdan Kawoosa, highlights there were 744 registered political parties in the Indian election of 2024 and the expected winners are not going to change. This number is sufficient to just imagine the level and the online content of the political memes in India.

The word 'meme' is used first time in a book titled '*The Selfish Gene*' authored by Richard Dawkins in 1976. He has described the word meme as an idea, behavior or style shared by person to person within a [common] culture. The memes have a psychological effect (Das, 2023). Memes are used mainly for fun and for entertainment. The power of memes is that they spread (viral online) so fast. Most of the visual memes are seen as a combination of two images with some superimposed. The contexts are easy to understand with the contemporary issues in a specific culture or country. Political memes are created intentionally. First to create a clear impact of a politically powerful and influential personality or to defame a political person who already has such influence on the public. The real concern is hateful political memes. The growing number of hateful memes on social media is a challenge. Political memes have the potential power to play with prejudice, memories and emotions (Kumar et al. 2024). The memes especially target powerful politicians, journalists, persons and people who have

strong public and policy opinions. As we are living in a global village in a networked society, international political memes are shared on social media. There is a tremendous level of creation and distribution of political memes in the online world. Hence, there is an academic urgency to study the topic critically and contextually. The paper explores the dynamics of politically forwarded posts and memes in the local context.

About the field: The strategic importance of Pune city as per digital infrastructure and SMART projects and a city of cultural capital with a substantial number of young people make it relevant for such research. Young people access digital gadgets like smartphones for making friendships and relationships online. It resulted in moral panics due to the social institutional context of society. Youth culture is a global phenomenon but at the local level, it is dealing with other social aspects like moral panics. The researcher recruited *ordinary* college-going students. Pune city is known as *Oxford of the East* because of the large number of schools, colleges, and universities situated in the core of the city. Pune is one of the biggest markets for education and related competitive exams UPSC (Union Public Service Commission) and MPSC (Maharashtra Public Service Commission). Pune City is known for its culture and legacy of social, and educational reformers including Jotiba Phule and Savitribai Phule. University of Pune has changed its name to Savitribai Phule Pune University in Honor of Savitribai Phule the first lady teacher of India on 9th August 2014. Many colleges were founded in British India including Deccan College, Fergusson College, COEP (College of Engineering Pune) College in the late nineteenth century, and the University of Pune. The university is one of the biggest universities in

Maharashtra. The University affiliates 811 colleges and stands as the second largest in the country. Hence Pune city is popular for higher education among youth in the country.

In the present study, the participants are in the age group between 18-22. The researcher does not reveal any personal, social, or religious identity in the research paper in any form because it is committed to ethical guidelines and consent from the participants. The respondents are from lower middle-class and middle-class families. Their families are in Pune city and few of them stay in Pune for just educational purposes. The respondents have shared personal views and experiences with the researcher in an incredibly open and friendly manner. Researchers have interviewed students to get more friendly interactions in which the respondents were comfortable without disturbing their *natural settings*. Respondents are from other villages and districts of Maharashtra where education facilities are rare. Pune is the most important city in terms of education and culture of Maharashtra after the financial capital Mumbai. Pune is a *dream city* for the villagers of Maharashtra where education and job opportunities are available. Students talk in the Marathi language. Very few students responded in Hindi and English. Most of them are first-generation learners and first-generation users of information technology like Smartphones and the Internet. They also teach their parents how to operate Smartphones for social media applications including Facebook and WhatsApp. Every respondent has multiple social media accounts. The socio-economic and cultural variety and heterogeneity in terms of class and caste are easily seen in the social educational ecosystems. The respondents were asked about their most preferred use of mobile internet and social media. Interestingly, the *meaning* of smartphone usage is more than mere access to telephone technology for the urban boys and girls of Pune. Researchers interpreted their access to smartphone use in a variety of contexts and negotiations. The usage-location context in which people access differently in different locations. The college canteens, classrooms, computer labs, libraries, tea stalls, gardens and their hostel rooms, homes, streets, and public transport. The access, usage, connectivity, and mobility all together make multiple contexts of the reasons for the use and negotiations. Mainly the negotiations are found in a moral dilemma of being a traditional and ethical person in a college setting, and another side of their online world is fundamentally different than the traditional ethical practices and behavior. Their access becomes impulsive, private, liberal, and global as the medium itself can offer such things on their smartphones. Switching into the online and offline world within a second is the most interesting negotiation for the urban youth. They think, behave, act, and react differently in the online world than in their social settings. They spend most of their time in the online world; especially on social media.

## **SMARTPHONE: GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY AND ITS LOCAL SETTINGS**

The college youth from Pune City experience media convergence in their everyday life by using smartphones. Researchers have observed that students wear wireless headphones, connect Bluetooth speakers, connect classroom devices to their smartphones, and experience digital

*compatibility*. Their smartphones are connected through the mobile internet. They communicate, share, consume, and produce digital content. Smartphones are an essential multipurpose communication device of the postmodern digital era youth. It reflects the way these digital manufacturing companies advertise such aspirations. India is one of the biggest consumer markets for digital goods. Manufacturing multinational companies associate the use of digital devices with success. The influence of such multinational advertisements can be easily seen. The economic and political importance of India as a market especially as an important location in the global south gets highlighted. The urban youth of Pune operates in a context of global pressures and the social settings of the locality.

The Internet is an essential enabling element for young people. Mobile internet is enabling us to fulfil several everyday needs. The study resembles Katz and Rice (2002) talk about the role of the internet and the understanding of the outside world. It is perception and at the same time becomes an obstacle [Digital Divide].

It may be that people who have been using the Internet for some time develop a different understanding, and experience of the Internet, and have different perceptions of relevant benefits and obstacles (Katz and Rice 2002).

The Hindu religious and caste-based ethos in the online world of the urban youth of Pune is a dominating discourse. The (Hindu) boys and girls (and of various castes) experience their religious values and beliefs as a hindrance in making friendships and relationships. No matter if they are of the same religion the caste has more veto power to determine the duration of their relationships. Many of them experienced short-term casual inter-caste, inter-religious relationships that hid it from their parents. The intersectionality of the possibilities of such relations and the available digital ecosystem such as connectivity and online presence become a modern global phenomenon. The meaning of being modern and global for the urban youth of Pune is associated with their relationship status and sharing among their peers and networks. The everyday negotiations between the value systems of being a rural traditional versus being urban and global become multi-contextual. The mediation of their everyday college life in the online world goes through negotiations. Romance and romantic relationships are amplified due to facilitated privacy due to mobile phones in India. Young Boys in slum areas hardly talk with young girls in their lives. Now mobile phones and social media give a private space where they talk freely without fear (Arora & Rangaswamy, 2015). In these responses, their father is a person who is controlling the privacy of the young girl. There is a collective consciousness (Walker, 2018) of patriarchy which is associated with the *ideal* role of genders. Patriarchy is always the source of women's oppression. At one point in time, the user who is a girl is enjoying the freedom and privacy that is not there in the traditional patriarchal discourses among Indian families which are challenged by mobile internet use. It allows the user to interact and connect with anyone anytime and anywhere.

The internet was a tool to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy, and creative lives (UNDP, 1999,

p.1). Mobile phone usage is playing a crucial role in India. Mobile phones are an enabler for young people in terms of privacy. The notion of *privacy* is not considered so seriously in Indian middle-class families (Agrawal, 2018) due to Indian traditional and orthodox nature and the joint family system. A movie titled *Parched* (2016) directed by Leena Yadav depicts the role of mobile phones which enable privacy for ordinary Hindu women from (Gujrat) India who rarely experience private space in their families due to the stronghold of patriarchy. The situation of young girls and women is the worst in India in terms of privacy and sexuality. Males of the family always dominate it. Another context of private space and its implication is the ban on the usage of 'smart smartphones among girls in India. There is a much-debated incident happening in Rajasthan where the upper caste community decided to ban smartphone use among unmarried young women. This incident is enough to comment on the role of mobile and the internet in facilitating an extension of privacy. From the point of view of the (upper caste) Thakur community mobile phones are making the young girls mad and they develop relationships with other men and run away. But they have given a reason that girls should focus on their studies wasting time on mobile phones. A member of parliament from Rajasthan also supports this judgment though it is illegal. Technology is power; it works as an enabler. Young girls use this power to go beyond the social cultural and institutional norms and behave as per their desire. Indian orthodox patriarchal mindset never accepts that young girls are behaving as per their own. So, the optimum level of use of mobile internet in India especially for young girls is far miles away than present. There is not much difference when it comes to urban young women. Though there is no ban as such, their usage is constantly under parental surveillance compared to young males. Smartphone is a personal device. The user must be in a private space to use it at an optimum level. Parents are the biggest threat to the college-going youth. However, they have interesting digital solutions to overcome such problems. They don't want to reveal their digital identity in front of their parents. Every ordinary Indian teenager pretends to be an ideal child in front of their parents but at the same time, his/her social media profile can show the real identity in terms of aspirations and desires. The normality of political communication over smartphones contains an archival value. Hence the usage itself basically is political. It goes through a variety of contexts and negotiations.

## TEXT, CONTEXTS, AND INTERTEXTUALITIES: CASTE AND ANIMOSITY IN THE DIGITAL SPACE

Pune is a city known for patriotic social reformers, and nationalists, and a place of radical social reformers especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this context, not just social factors but political factors also affect, and shape communication technology on local levels. B.R. Ambedkar (1936) in his book *Annihilation of Caste* (1936) commented scholarly upon the social issue of caste in India. Indian caste structure and democracy are paradoxes. The existence of both will never achieve the objective of social welfare, equality, and social democracy. Marxist scholarship on class and exploitation

is merely unable to overcome Indian social issues because of caste. No other country in the world shares common characteristics with the caste structure in India. Hence, the incorporation of caste in the social shaping of technology remains important and unavoidable. Respondents reported on multiple *social* factors, caste-based discriminations, and most of the social factors are deeply rooted in the *social consciousness* of Indian society. Their responses highlight it.

*"Once, a [A Hindu, upper caste, right wing] teacher scolded me badly on social media, when I posted my views regarding an anti-rightist [online] post"* (Rohit, 21)

In this regard, the marginal, vulnerable communities, minorities, and underprivileged members are easily trolled by the dominating political, and cultural discourses. The proliferation of mobile media has the potential to transform how people organize, interact, and come together in public places. Urban spaces are dynamic in terms of social contexts like education, employment, political ideology, class [Caste in India], and gender (Humphreys, 2010). According to Wallace (1999), the internet is an [social] environment but people behave differently because real-time contexts and identity are absent.

The internet is an environment that allows people to act and interact with other people in ways that they are not normally able to do...people behave differently on the internet like putting on 'masks' and it is different than they are in real life. (Wallace, 2015)

Social factors like values, beliefs, religion, caste, gender, morals, and even the age of the users affect online usage. The choices are central to their social shaping. The *choices* are there and when they get *selected* by the individuals then the context gets created. The location, the person, and associated social institutional factors shape the usage of the technology. Technology impact may vary as per the social groups. Mobile Phone technology is *telematics* (Williams, 1997) and it is used for social communication. As per the Marxist analysis of technology, the supplier and the customer are very much indirect. There is no direct exploitation. The user is not being ordered to do so but the user has his/her *conscious* selection strategy to select and appropriate the technology. Hence, the customized and configured communication technology should be examined with the latest technological innovations and within the locality-specific social contemporary contexts. Indian caste-specific heterogeneity, hierachal, and social contexts are fundamentally different from the homogeneous Western and other Asian societies. The study of mobile communication requires research attention on these authentic contexts. This research is one of the uncommon scholarships that combines science and technology with a locally unique political-caste context in terms of the usage and access of global technologies. Sociologically the caste-based structure of Indian society and sociality is the prominent yet more influential (in terms of power) actor that *shapes* the usage. The users operate the communication technology as per their social institutional identities. The caste (Identity) remains the most powerful element in the online space too since the Indian social structure is still caste-driven even in twenty-first-century Digital India, though caste-based discrimination is considered 'illegal' as per

the laws of the Indian government.

The respondents were asked about their awareness, experiences regarding caste, and animosity in their social media usage. Rahul (19) responded openly about his caste identity and his inter-caste family.

*"My parents are from different castes, my father is from a different caste, my mother even my aunts, one is from Brahmin (Name of a caste) and the other is Lingayat (Name of a Caste), the mother is Maratha (Name of a Caste), my grandmother is also Brahmin I am Dhungar (Name of a Caste) and my father. So, it is a caste Khichadi [Hindi word] (Meaning: Mixture) in my family. But everyone has their [Online] caste groups, and everyone knows that we are from different caste [Identity]." (Rahul, 19)*

In an in-depth interview with Rahul (19), the researcher observed that teenagers like him are well-conditioned and nurtured traditionally when it comes to their caste identity. His understanding and knowledge, perceptions about caste as a prominent social institutional hierarchical setting were much deeper than his academic domain-specific knowledge. His family is a multi-caste cultural family and all are Hindus. Interestingly every member has their caste-specific online/social media group. A teenager who has just entered a formal educational institution is a global aspirant but he is aware of his caste roots. This awareness is well enough to manipulate and negotiate their caste identities, friendships, and relationships. The digital online space is an additional and indirect way that holds the capacity and potential to manifest and create hatred and caste discrimination. Social hierarchies, social institutions, caste, and kinship are influenced by the domestication of technology (Tenheunen, 2008). Social media is also a manifestation of caste categories like Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes in India. Social media is a best practice for trolling politicians in India. (Venkatraman, 2017).

Another response upon animosity, religious hatred, and mob lynching. The *indirect* and *invisible* forms of caste notions, social discriminations, and superiority caste consciousness are *visible* enough on social media spaces more saliently than in real-life situations in urban localities.

These two responses particularly about the animosity and hatred indicate the religious dominating discourses, cultural politics, and fear. The urban youth is seriously aware of such political critical issues. There is a sense that something like war is happening over social media. Smita (21) responded with anxiety.

*"I have seen videos [ONLINE] mentioning the scenario of Kashmir [North Indian State], and somebody put a counter video...all are keyboard warriors now...in my observation, the things are happening in a particular year only [There were elections in the year 2019]" (Smita, 21)*

The young generation of urban localities is aware of the social, political, and religious tensions because they get the information on social media in a more realistic way than the mass media. Their political, and religious consciousness is seen more prominently than any other information. It is because of the political power shift. The presently ruling party BJP

(Bhartiya Janata Party) of India, is right-wing, and its core values of masculinity, patriotism, and patriarchy are reflected in the views and online posts of urban youth. It is a cultural politics of Hindu dominating discourse in contemporary India through the digital media and space.

Technologies produced and used in social contexts, and the processes of technological change are intrinsically *social* rather than simply driven by a technical logic. Technological change is always part of a *socio-technical* transformation technology and social arrangements are *co-produced* in the same process. (Russell & Williams, 2002)

The social constructivist approach draws on the sociology of scientific knowledge. The inequalities of internet users may affect how people get access to education, employment, and health. The internet is unique in assembling people sharing common thoughts and ideas and making *homogeneous* online communities. The Internet enhances social capital by facilitating people to build their own social and professional networks. The internet's cultural effects will vary among user groups. (DiMaggio et al. 2001). Technologies are basic needs. It provides food, shelter, and clothes to entertain and heal us (Makenzie, 1999) the sociology of technology is a broad field. It is concerned with how social processes, actions, and structures relate to technology and this is concerned with technological determinism (Mackay & Gillespie, 1992). The Internet is used for a variety of reasons, but the *social* usage of the Internet is prominent. It is a source of information, it is a tool for communication, it enables human interactions, and it is a social system in which there is no need to meet people. The Internet is a tool for social learning (Maignan & Lukas, 1997). The design and implementation of technology are patterned by various social and economic factors as well as technical considerations. (Williams and Edge, 1996). The internet is a critically important site for sociology researchers to test technology diffusion and media effects particularly because of media convergence and integrating modes of communication and various forms of content (DiMaggio et al. 2001). The proliferation of mobile media has the potential to transform how people organize, interact, and come together in public places. Urban spaces are dynamic in terms of social contexts like education, employment, political ideology, class [Caste in India], and gender. (Humphreys, 2010). The unique structure of the internet demands user-generated content and supports the free exploitation of free labour and producers and the exploitation rate is virtually infinite (Feenberg, 2017). Social factors are crucial in the social shaping of technology. Each factor of the societal element is invested in making any kind of technology. The internet is a techno-social dynamic system. With the rise of information capitalism, the exploitation of commons became a central process in capital accumulation. The technological infrastructures enable and constrain forms of communication. It enables the subjectification of objective knowledge in the minds of people. People think, behave, and project how the knowledge is stored in the techno systems (Fuchs, 2007). Social dynamics work between potential users and their social environments, household and social networks, designers, producers, and policy makers' managers that *shape* which kind of technology will be used and what type of society will emerge (Haddon, 2016).

The caste-based discrimination in the online and offline world affects the mental health of the youth and might result in some serious outcomes. College campuses are politically sensitive in this regard because all types of castes and religions are represented through every individual and in the absence of secular and democratic values the educational institutions might be converted into a place and locations of injustice, hatred, and intolerance. Respondents were reported about political memes. Their understanding of contemporary national and local politics is associated with the memes. It is one of the fastest ways to understand political contemporaries. The memes work as a multiplier effect of an ideology or a message. It forms the opinion of the user. It carries politically and ideologically loaded messages.

*"I don't watch TV news. I come to know about politics through the memes on Instagram"* (Pramod, 19)

A teenager responded to the political and religious memes and forwarded posts. The online discourse reflects the core public religious sentiments.

*"I receive many posts against the Muslims... Some agencies work for them. It is not direct but THEY [Emphasized by Researcher] create some sort of Nationalism or Patriotic Facebook pages and religious messages can easily be injected."* (Chinmay, 21)

Wiggins (2019) in the book titled: *The Discursive Power of Memes in Digital Culture: Ideology, semiotics, and Intertextuality* (2019). According to the author, memes are discursive and an important part of the digital culture. Most of the time it is public criticism of a politician, celebrity, and other influential public figures, sometimes advertisements and brands. The image-based memes are clear to understand with a small text added by the users. According to Cannizzaro (2016), internet memes are a part of semiotic studies. It is widely shared in the digital culture. Its applicability is socio-political and contemporarily contextual.

Memes in the digital culture expertly contextualize theories and sociocultural framework (Vickery, 2015). It is a participatory culture where users or online citizens (Popularly termed as Netizens) comment through satirical yet humorous and it contains the accurate message. Sharing of political memes and forwards are common practice among the urban youth of Pune. The memes are mostly based on contemporary social-political situations. The urban youth of Pune shared that they come to know about political issues more accurately than the mainstream media news. The meme became a public opinion of the online community. The young generation of urban localities is aware of the social, political, and religious tensions because they get the information on social media in a more realistic way than the mass media. Their political, and religious consciousness is seen more prominently than any other information. It is because of the political power shift. The ruling party (Bharatiya Janata Party) of India, is right-wing, and their core values of masculine patriotic, and patriarchal are reflected among the urban youth. It is a cultural politics of Hindu dominating discourse in contemporary India. The social constructivist approach draws on the sociology of scientific knowledge. The inequalities of internet users may affect how people get access to education, employment, and health. The

internet is unique in assembling people sharing common thoughts and ideas and making *homogeneous* online communities. The Internet enhances social capital by facilitating people to build their own social and professional networks. The internet's cultural effects will vary among user groups. (DiMaggio et al. 2001). Technologies are basic needs. It provides food, shelter, and clothes to entertain and heal us (Makenzie, 1999) the sociology of technology is a broad field. It is concerned with how social processes, actions, and structures relate to the technology and this is concerned with technological determinism (Mackay & Gillespie, 1992). The Internet is used for a variety of reasons, but the *social* usage of the Internet is prominent. It is a source of information, it is a tool for communication, it enables human interactions, and it is a social system in which there is no need to meet people. The Internet is a tool for social learning (Maignan & Lukas, 1997). The design and implementation of technology are patterned by various social and economic factors as well as technical considerations. (Williams and Edge, 19996). The internet is a critically important site for sociology researchers to test technology diffusion and media effects particularly because of media convergence and integrating modes of communication and various forms of content (DiMaggio et al. 2001). The proliferation of mobile media has the potential to transform how people organize, interact, and come together in public places. Urban spaces are dynamic in terms of social contexts like education, employment, political ideology, class [Caste in India] and gender. (Humphreys, 2010). The unique structure of the internet demands user-generated content and supports the free exploitation of free labour and producers and the exploitation rate is virtually infinite (Feenberg, 2017). Social factors are crucial in the social shaping of technology. Each factor of the societal element is invested in making any kind of technology. The internet is a techno-social dynamic system. With the rise of information capitalism, the exploitation of commons became a central process in capital accumulation. The technological infrastructures enable and constrain forms of communication. It enables the subjectification of objective knowledge in the minds of people. People think, behave, and project how the knowledge is stored in the techno systems (Fuchs, 2008). Social dynamics work between potential users and their social environments, household and social networks, designers, producers, and policy makers' managers that *shape* which kind of technology will be used and what type of society will emerge (Haddon, 2016).

The caste-based discrimination in the online and offline world affects the mental health of the youth and might result in some serious outcomes. College campuses are more sensitive in this regard because all types of castes and religions are represented through every individual and in the absence of secular and democratic values the educational institutions might be converted into a place and locations of injustice, hatred, and intolerance. Youth are distinctive adaptors of mobile internet. We should theoretically marry youth and mobile phones (Goggin, 2008). Global communication technologies like mobile internet, search engines, social media applications, various Smartphone manufacturing companies, content producers, and advertisers form a digital ecosystem where the end user becomes more vital because they are the producer's

consumers and distributors at the same time. Youth as a generation uses these global technologies at their optimum level. Mobile phones have become private devices and most people do not like to share their mobile phones (Chakraborty, 2006). It is also responded by most of the respondents from urban Pune youth. Whether the Smartphone user is a girl or a boy, or from a village, town, or metropolitan city, no matter from any caste or class they do not like any kind of surveillance in their internet private space. It is truly private and individualized due to their personalized self-controlled Smartphones. Youth from Pune reported that they do not even like it if their parents complain or ask them to show their phones. It gives them a sense of violation of their privacy and authoritarian hierarchical encroachment. It enables them to overcome many social barriers to interpersonal communication. Young Boys in slum areas hardly talk with young girls in their lives. Now mobile phones and social media give a private space where they talk freely without fear (Arora & Rangaswamy, 2015).

These themes have a specific focus in terms of Smartphone usage and political communication. It has explored the need for earnestness in any post, especially on *Instagram*. It indicates the habitual need for instant gratification through social media comments and likes for the youth. It alters the way young people live their personal, social, and political lives. Everything including caste negotiations, friendships, relationships, break-ups, and patch-ups must be on the social media posts that are documented, and stored, as an archive on social media. It gives them a sense of digital presence. Not just communication but their moods are also highly interconnected with their overall usage of mobile internet. The virtuosity of reality is essential for young people without knowing its reason and need. They follow because of peer pressures, take it as a trend and fashion, and keep on doing any relevant or irrelevant activity there. They must be *online* all the time. There is a granted assumption that other people are already available online and I must see or let them see what I do in the online space. It may lead to over-communication.

## DISCUSSION:

The nuances of digital literacy, the agency of young people, and their naturalized interactions should be recognized critically (Sarawate & Raman, 2022). It is a [political] symbolic interaction within the networks of human and non-human actors. The values and culture highlight the magnitude of technology in everyday life. The twenty-first-century global urban ecosystems are fabricated through the technology itself. The (Over) dependency on smartphone-based communication is a sign of a different society. The city ecosystem enforces the youth for perpetual connectivity and access without time and space and social institutional (Caste, religion in this context) constraints. Interestingly, the twenty-first-century global urban youth of Pune are still concerned about their political and caste identities, and *Instagram*-based (memes and posts) interactions become temporary in the online world.

The smartness of technology usage is embedded with the new possibilities and intersectionality of multiple possibilities. The convergence of media is well experienced through smartphone use. The media convergence process is not merely

technological, but it has social, cultural, and political implications (Dwyer, 2010). The smarter use of smart people is crossing local and even national borders. The youth of Pune reported about their internationality in terms of friendships, followers, and posts, it all together makes them a global entity in a much-localized setting. Their education, art and culture, hobbies, ideologies, and entertainment are heavily mediated. The glowing small screens of their smartphones make a variety of interventions. Urban college students of Pune were asked about their smartphone-based general everyday activities. They responded vividly. College campuses in Pune look politically very colorful because of the multiple vibrant colors of their student organizations, and the modern and traditional (religious) costumes of collegians. In a variety of multiple religious, class, caste, and cultural identities, and commonality among all is the smartphone in their hands. College campus as a location becomes a very crucial element in terms of smartphone use. The college campus becomes a liberal and democratic space for students who come from traditional families and villages. The value system of an urban locality is much different than parent-surveillance and morality policing. College campus becomes a space of youth-majority, urban codes, trends, fashions, and a place of newness. In these natural settings, the researcher approached the respondents and interacted with these 'locations'.

According to Katz and Aakhus (2002), technology is a mind and society-altering technology. It is dramatically changing communication and relationships and people are more heavily dependent upon this kind of technology than ever before. Mobile phones' speed, efficiency, appropriation, access, and affordability everything counted in the light of research on mobile communication. Goggin (2013) notes an important observation that the category of youth is strategically important in the development of mobile communication and media research. Technology, particularly the mobile internet, is incorporated into the life of youth. Interdisciplinary research is a requirement in this field. Rich Ling (2004) has also pioneered writings and research in this area. The book *Youth Society and Mobile Media in Asia* by Donald, Anderson, and Spry (2010) explores Mobile, navigations, and innovations associated with mobile phone usage. It explores the importance of mobility in the lives of young people. Identity and how mobile internet usage makes their real identity among peer groups. Apart from this all intimacy and desires are also mobile mediated among young people. Mobile phones are Larissa Hjorth (2008). The personal and intimate discourses associated with mobile phones and it is a vast area for mobile communication research at the global level.

Despite the politically religious contemporary tensions between the Hindus and Muslims, the student of media and communication studies tells about a music composition which was designed and developed by a Pakistani friend. These interstate and inter-religious interactions and intersectionality could take place in online spaces. These social, cultural, and religious intersectionality are characteristics of the smart people of the smart city. The ecosystem of digital is global in a real sense because of worldwide network capability. These two representative examples of millennials highlight the scope of intercultural communication research in a broader and

sustainable global digital society. *Participatory Culture in a Networked Era* (2015) by Jenkins, Ito, and Boyd explores the characteristics of internet culture which is participatory in Nature. A participatory culture embraces the values of diversity and democracy through every aspect of our interaction with each other. (Jenkins, et. al, 2015). The nature of the internet is user generated means the internet user individual must generate the content. Social media applications are merely *empty* applications that get *filled* by billions and trillions of kilobytes worldwide by users. This participatory-based engagement keeps young people, or the users of mobile media always engaged.

The Internet and the digital space are global communication technologies. It is fundamentally different from other mass media. Mobile Internet and Smartphones have revolutionized the way ordinary people communicate, work, and explore information and knowledge. Global technology has multiple facets. Technology-human relations are reaching new heights. Social appropriation of technology remains more important than mere technology and the medium. The local-level access to the internet gives an empowered sense in terms of global connectivity and modernity. The politics of technology alters the power dynamics of the social institutional hierarchies and structures. The intersectionality of socially traditional and globally-modern operates in a variety of possibilities. In the global politics of digital technologies, India is a strategically and geopolitically important location; Thomas P.N (2019) as a market and as a supplier of the cheap labour force in the world.

There is one common thing among the users no matter what their gender age and identity is. They all use mobile media for making the content. They are a small part of the big concept of *media convergence*. Every college student from the city has a smartphone. The smartphone is an enabler. It is a digital tool that brings them from nothing to everything. It helps them to create their own identity, boost their creativity, make their content, and share it on global social media platforms.

## CONCLUSION:

The Internet is the main change agent of the twenty-first century networked society. Youth across the globe are the main and active consumers of online content. Memes are commonly shared and widely consumed content on social media. Political memes are seen as the powerful influencers on the minds of public opinion especially in the time of elections. Memes are heavily loaded with strong and direct messages. Memes have no gatekeeping nor censorship institutional frameworks, unlike mass media. Visual memes with two prominent pictures with a caption and texts are the most popular forms. A South Asian and the biggest democratic country like India, where political memes play decisive roles. Memes can be decoded by both the literates and the illiterates as the visuals are the main powerful elements. The memes mainly target users with a 'strong' political message. Sharing and creating memes have gained popularity in cyberspace. Memes can be considered as individualistic digital expressions about something in a format. Though it is gaining popularity, the politically loaded and hateful memes are a threat to the social harmony of society.

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