

REPORT ON

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# CHALLENGE POSED BY **POLITICAL HATE** AGENDA AND THE ROLE OF **SOCIAL MEDIA**

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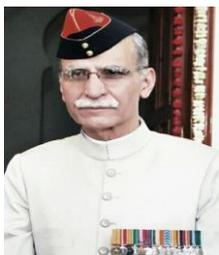
**Dr Arshi Javaid, Media and Research Associate IMPAR**

Dr Arshi Javaid gave introductory remarks. She welcomed everyone and introduced the vision of IMPAR to all the participants.



**Dr Khwaja Shahid, Former Registrar Jamia Millia Islamia, Vice Chancellor MANUU, and Member, Central Steering Committee Member IMPAR**

The concerns raised by IMPAR through this webinar are about hate, misinformation, racism, communalism in relation to politics and the use of social media. Political discourse is done through social media. All the news is flashing on Twitter in the present times. Majority of information is sought through Youtube, Facebook which are more popular than newspapers. The drawback of this is that the areas of discussion are not the issues but the personalities now. Political issues are not discussed but how many comments are we receiving has become the trend. There is a need to address how Facebook is supporting ruling party. If a newspaper is publishing something, we can hold it accountable which is not the case with social media. He cited an example of recent Bangalore Riots how a post on these platforms can incite violence in just 24 hours.



**Lt Gen Zameer Uddin Shah, Former Vice Chancellor AMU, and Member, Central Steering Committee Member IMPAR**

Lt Gen Zameer - u-din Shah explained how social media tools like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. are so popular, the reasons for their popularity are that they are free, instant and they have anonymity. Anonymity provides people the freedom to write any rubbish and they will not be harmed. He pointed out the means of communication- reading and hearing are worthwhile but the most important form is seeing. It develops direct connection with the audience and hence, can instigate easily through visual media. He acknowledged that it is very difficult to control social media but gave a few pointers of how to curb menace of social media. While posting, one must respond to only sensible people without menace and don't need to respond to bhakts and bigots.

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**Advocate Feroze Ghazi, Secretary General SAMLA, and Member, Central Steering Committee Member IMPAR**

Mr Ghazi defined hate speech. He explained how freedom of speech turns into hate speech. Law exists to cover hate speech but the question is can law stop hate speech? Well, yes it can. Many people are charged under such cases. But hate mongers are posting hate messages with immunity. Even if a complaint is filed against them, no action is being taken. Law is applied only on minorities even for simple posts. As a result, minorities are hesitated in expressing even the elementary stake. This can be stopped by implementing law on the hate mongers. Hate speeches have increased at least by 500 per cent post 2014. Among these, only 3 per cent belongs to the common man. Rest is spread by the ruling party leaders. They fan out hate speech with impunity. We are against hate speech as it is impacting our national ethos and is against the national interest. If any message is impacting the national interest, it can be stopped through proper implementation of law and order but administration is also lacking. Hate mongers must be dealt with in organising manner.



**Mr Pankaj Pachauri, Founder and Editor in Chief of GoNews India. Worked with NDTV, BBC, India Today, The Sunday Observer, The Patriot & the Prime Minister's Office from 2012-2014**

India witnessed hate speech from 2010-2012. Mr Pachauri explains that there is a need to understand its origin which will help us in understanding why it has reached to this fervid stage. He addressed why the heads of social media platforms such as Google, Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter, WhatsApp are Indians now. It is because they want the face to be Indian so that we do not get to know they are American companies. These companies have largest economic interest areas to cover. 60 per cent rural women do not have access to education, connectivity or awareness of connectivity. Their issues are ignored and this is an example of dumping democracy. If one is not connected to digital media, one may not be able to use government acts. So, this is punishing them for their lack of awareness of connectivity. And connectivity is important in order to flourish the businesses.

Mr Pachauri explains the political economy of social media companies. India is second largest database for Twitter. If it's not for revenue then the reason is politics and that's how these companies are making money. There is no government area which doesn't have social media tools. They have it for scholarships, pensions, etc. Hindu Dal RSS, BJP are pushing their agenda through social media. India has not signed privacy laws under United Nations for this reason. If we think that they are free platforms then we are wrong. We need to understand that common man is not the consumer but the product of these companies. If a person is posting something, he/she is building content for these companies which is sold by them to billions of people. More than 300 crore people are their product.

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Now there is a question on accountability. These companies have huge databases. They are the new states. The ruling party claims that they have database of mobile holders. 40 crore people have smartphones in India and they are involved in spreading hate resulting in riots. The country has been witnessing mass protests in around 150 cities. Violence broke out in many areas because of social media hate messages. These companies in collaboration with governments are increasing their database to increase their businesses.

He then addressed hate politics. It is not only in India but in Turkey right wing people who are in power are using this platform. In India, Facebook is not removing hate mongering by BJP leaders because people who are against hate mongers their voices are weak here unlike America where #blacklivesmatter was heard out. Indian database is more right wing inclined.

When WHO was fighting AIDS and HIV, they said that if you have a swimming pool or pond nearby then the kids will go there. So, it's better to teach them swimming. Similarly, we need to see how we can learn to swim in this social media pond. There is a need to change social media laws. We need a protocol of using social media within limits and should not be breaking the law. In Finland, fake news has almost come to an end. There 5<sup>th</sup> grade students in school are taught to identify fake news. In India, national emblem is of the utmost importance but the Government of India was allowing private company's logo in official briefing and an RTI was filed but not replied. No one knows who took that decision. So, we can see that there is government support to these companies. The aim is to create profits. After COVID period, seven companies have increased assets of 2 trillion dollars in just seven months, and they tied up with the government we need to fight back by being united and not breaking any law.

Mr Pachauri answered a few questions thereby concluding the webinar. There is KYC on Aadhar, Driving License, Aarogya Setu, Bank Account, etc. then why not on Facebook or Twitter because the government wants the hate mongers to be hidden behind fake accounts. They are not changing policy because of the spread of fake news and hate speech resulting in flourishing of their businesses. It's in government hands to control it.

He advised IMPAR to create a legal cell. It can quickly advise the person how he/she can address the case. Democratic party has more than 5000 lawyers to deal with legal action. Google and Facebook spend 150 million dollars in lobbying senators. If a PIL is filed against them, they have money and big lawyers who'd take up their case. Similarly, IMPAR's legal cell can take quick action.



**Mr. Khalid Ansari, Executive Director IMPAR**

Vote of thanks is proposed by Mr Khalid Ansari, Executive Director IMPAR. Mr Ansari expressed that we need to act not react. He thanked the hon'ble speaker and other guests.

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306 , Rohit House, Tolstoy Road, New Delhi - 110001  
Email: [info@impar.in](mailto:info@impar.in), Contact No: 011-43595456, Fax No: 011-23731130  
U74999DL2015NPL281054 | Website: [www.impar.in](http://www.impar.in)