HS8.101 Making of Contemporary World

Project

ALL THREE projects will revolve around smartphone/laptop-related technologies.

Group 1:

This group will look at the following:

a) Raw material sourcing patterns. Where do the raw materials come from? Where are they being transported/used/processed? Which countries? What does that tell you?
b) The manufacturing process. Where is it happening?
c) What are raw material sourcing and manufacturing doing to the modern world? How is it impacting economies? What is it doing to labour/class/gender relations?

Group 2:

This group will look at the following:

a) How modern digital technologies are shaping the modern world? What are these technologies doing to social relations?
b) How are these technologies creating/shaping modern social relations? What are they doing to individual personalities, to relations *between* families, friends, communities, and social groups?

You can see the following videos as references:

https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2019/hail-algorithms/index.html, The Social Dilemma on Netflix.

Group 3:

This group will look at the following:

a) Political aspects of digital technologies.
b) Data colonialism, international trade relations, skewed power dynamics etc.

One of the Al Jazeera videos talks of data colonialism and can be a useful starting point here. Also, see

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282526339_The_Core_of_the_Apple_Degrees_of_Monopoly_and_Dark_Value_in_Global_Commodity_Chains

https://monthlyreview.org/2015/07/01/imperialism-and-the-transformation-of-values-into-prices/

How are modern digital technologies shaping the modern world?

Technology has become an integral component of our daily lives, permeating every aspect of businesses, public space, and our social lives. It has become such an indispensable part of everyone's routine that life without technology seems pointless. It has penetrated so much in our society that Haryana's recent internet shutdown faced a considerable backlash. In the tough times of CoVid-19, the internet helped us to enjoy our quarantine. A quarantine without technology would be challenging to face. A more straightforward example is trying to do a plank for a minute. You see how long a minute can be, try to watch your favourite song, and realize how fast a minute passes.

Evidence for this synergy has been found since the inception of simple tools by human beings. The inter-relationship has continued as modern technologies such as computers have helped shape our social environment. Of all the other technological evolution changes, one of the most arguable ones is societal and its impact on communities and cultures. While modern digital technology has many pros, some negative impacts exist, and some are unknown.

The development of new technologies helps to save lives. Technology has evolved and shaped our workplaces in countless ways. They have improved work ethics, making the business more systematic. Specific jobs have evolved, which people earlier could not even think to pursue. Working from home seemed like a joke to people born before the 20th century. Various technologies have become synonymous with luxuries. The technology of a period is a mark of development humans have passed with time. Technology is also a measure of comparison between various states. For example, a technologically advanced state like the USA is considered more potent than Bangladesh. And it is one of the reasons why India is considered a 3rd world country.

Further, I discuss how modern technologies impact various communities and social groups. And how one can misuse the technologies to spread their agendas. The impact of modern technologies on communities and social groups can be considered a coin. They have two sides, one positive and another negative. We can say that the communication between the state, communities, and social groups has improved, but we cannot say this has improved for good. This topic is arguable.

The world and access to its people opened with technologies. Now any community can easily send their message to the government, and the reach of a message or idea increases. Earlier, it was not easy to interact with people remotely, but now reaching a piece of information, there is much more comfortable. Those who cannot visit a holy place can watch the live telecast directly on mobile, keeping people close to their culture. E.g., Vaishno Devi aarti telecast from Katra is quite common in North Indian Hindu households. People can easily understand other cultures and spread their community's guidelines, ideas, or opinions or what they preach. Communities of NRI people living outside the country now often find it easy to send money back home and get help from Indian bureaucracy with just one tweet in unfavourable conditions.

One of the most apparent benefits is that of speed. News of all kinds gets delivered instantly via our tablets, desktops, smartphones, and whatnot. Anyone from anywhere has this great platform to express themselves through social media. The world supports Farmers of Haryana and Punjab against Farm Bills 2020 against farmers' community interests. A tweet is now enough to shake the whole system. Rihanna's recent tweet on Farm Bills 2020 sparked a discussion about whether someone who is not an Indian national should comment on India's internal matter or not. MeToo movement against harassment of women. Me-too is one of the most revolutionary movements in humankind's history, and such a great movement was not possible without the help of technology. The movement became the voice of the women facing harassment on their workstations or any level—opportunities for the suppressed class to bounce back and join the mainstream population. What could be a better example of this than the current scenario where so many crucial things,

like education, administration, etc., are being done online without putting anything at a halt, and anyone can access them?

But just as another side of the coin, the cons list is also extensive.

Thanks to technology, the divide between various communities and social groups is also increasing daily. We have seen the Hindu versus Muslim debates at their peak since India and Pakistan's partition. There are dedicated Facebook groups to spread hatred, and dedicated bots are used by various political parties to spread their propaganda against any community among other communities. Fake news is not a new thing. It is easy to spread a piece of fake news than ever in today's era, which is enough to create a massive divide between any two groups. For example, the Indian govt imposed Demonetization on Nov 8, 2016, to fight black money. This step's success is debatable, but as fast as the message spreads that 500 and 2000 rupee notes are not legal tender, various fake news tends to start spreading such that there are trackable chips in new notes. Or another such popular fake news is Shah Rukh Khan donating to Pakistan and organizing funds for ISI. The spread of this fake news often becomes essential in causing heinous situations such as riots. It helps the parties polarize elections and win the majority by spreading communal hatred.

After the widespread internet, especially after Jio came into the scene, it is easily observable that most people are now totally inclined towards one side of the coin. Many governments or parties use these tactics to take advantage of these loopholes. It is easier to flag your voice online, but now many sharks in the sea will never let you surface your voice. The polarization of elections using algorithms by wooing communities and creating one over another authority is the new normal. With the help of algorithms, various political parties use social media to spend propaganda. It sells influence several individuals and communities and tries to make a community a vote bank which is an attack on the basic idea of democracy that each vote and individual vote matter by creating a feeling that every community should go with a particular party to represent them.

However, riots are occurring at a higher frequency than in earlier times. A riot is an event that is highly difficult to manage, but now it is easier to create a stir because many people communicate better and unfavourably use technology. However, many people take personal vendettas and kill their counterparts in the name of riots. And such crimes are also increasing daily, and many people start the blame game of a riot or lynching to divert the hatred toward any community. Defamation of communities or popularizing negative impacts of a cult/culture is also high.

Now, there are paid tweets and tweets by bots to make a trend and make something a hot topic. Trolls are now paid and try to overpower the voice of people. Communal propaganda is now spread through tweets. And it can easily be observed by analyzing daily Twitter trends in India. And the easy targets of bots to spread hate are a generation exposed to the internet in their 40s. These people easily believe everything they see on social media is accurate, which makes them rigid about what they believe is right. And due to patriarchy, it is believed that every family member should feel the same, taking one individual ability to think. Also making families and groups hollow on a fundamental level.

With the excess use of applications like TikTok, the average attention span of an avid TikTok user has reduced to 15 seconds, which means that people want a result of an action in 15 seconds, which reduces one's capability to think. The average attention span of someone who watches a movie is about 3 hours, and one who watches a movie that reads a book is more than a day. This then makes people not listen to the other side of the story. And that's how the lack of freedom of speech results from people's attention span becoming so low that they cannot tolerate the other side of the story. And the bigger picture makes a section of people inferior, which widens the gap between the various groups of society.

The impact on a community or social group due to modern technologies is a collective effort of word effort to modern civilizations' relationships and personal level. There is a rise in rice in eye strain thanks to loads of screen time. Too much screen time adversely affects people's health, particularly eyesight. The number of people going into depression had increased remarkably during these times when people's best mate was technology. People have indeed become more approachable, but a goodwill text cannot do what a hug would. Earlier, people visited each other's place to occasionally meet and greet them, cherish one another's presence, and relish the food. However, we can stay in contact with people far away from us. Technology has made people less socialized and more individualistic. More people tend to be introverts due to this growing tech world, which leads to less confidence and, hence, adds to weakness on the part of one's personality. And these people are soft targets for political parties to influence and add to their vote bank.

Privacy breaches of some particular groups in the name of national security in tense areas such as Kashmir. There are many instances in that governments breach the data privacy of citizens. The Indian govt promoted the Arogya Satu app to help you determine whether you can contact the Covid-19 virus. Many researchers denounced the application because unlike apps released by other countries for contact tracing, which requires your Bluetooth to be always on end, it was designed with privacy by design approach. It also collected the personal information of the citizens and government, making it mandatory against one liberty. And that's why Karnataka High Court revoked this decision. Such debates often end without a proper conclusion because both sides have enough valid points and a multidimensional debate.

Modern technologies enabled us to search for how to make a computer program and a bomb. It depends on one's consciousness to decide. The positive impacts of technology tend to bind us together, but some people misuse the tiny differences between two communities to divide the people. The positive impacts of technology often reduce one's physical work, but the negative aspects focus more on hitting someone emotionally. Once again, it all depends on us being in the driving seat or puppet.