



## Mains Practice Question

**Q.** If there's one fundamental truth about social media's impact on democracy it's that it amplifies human intent — both good and bad. Comment.

08 Jul, 2021 GS Paper 2 Polity & Governance

### Approach

- Start the answer by briefly discussing the impact of social media on democracy.
- Discuss the positive and negative impacts of social media on democracy.
- Conclude Suitably.

### Introduction

Around the world, social media is making it easier for people to have a voice in government — to discuss issues, organize around causes, and hold leaders accountable.

However, due to its unregulated nature and its role in the spread of fake news, social media leads to spread of propaganda, targets minorities, destabilizes the elected governments, which all in turn compromises the spirit of democracy.

### Body

#### Positives of Social Media

- **Digital Democracy:** Democratic values can evolve when people have freedom of expression. In this way, social media enables the concept of digital democracy through these platforms of freedom.
- **Setting Accountability:** Social media acts as an instrument that can question the seemingly invincible governments, make them accountable and bring sustained change driven by people beyond one vote in years.
- **Giving Voice:** Social media has enormous power to keep people informed. This can be seen, when social media played a critical role in the Arab Spring in places like Tunisia, it was heralded as a technology for liberation.
- **Civic Engagement:** Social media's implications for civic engagement are profound, as many people tend to discuss & debate news over these platforms.

#### Negatives of Social Media

- **Political Polarization:** One of the most common criticisms of social media is that it creates echo chambers where people only see viewpoints they agree with — further driving us apart.
- **Propaganda Setting:** According to Google Transparency Report, social media enables Micro-targeting campaigns by the political parties. Due to these, dishonest campaigns spread toxic discourse without much consequence.
- **Foreign Interference:** Around the US 2016 election, Russian entities set up and promoted fake Pages on Facebook to influence public sentiment — essentially using social media as an information weapon.

- **Fake News:** Social media gives people more voice and can sometimes be used, by anyone, to spread hoaxes and misinformation.

## Conclusion

If there's one fundamental truth about social media's impact on democracy it's that it amplifies human intent — both good and bad. At its best, it allows us to express ourselves and take action. At its worst, it allows people to spread misinformation and corrode democracy.

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