

Social Media Sites as Platforms for Human Good

Raj Kumar Baral

University of Texas at El Paso

Social Media sites (Facebook and Twitter in this paper), backed by scientific innovation, co-constituting with social movements as the actors for activism, contributed and has been contributing to the pressing issue like social justice. On this backdrop, this paper centres around the question--- how do social media sites function as the novel emancipatory organizational tools for easier participation, unification, mobilization and organization of the protest movement and as the resistance sites for the democratic transformation of the society? Through wider and rapid dissemination of information, social media sites influence the psychology of the users, making them ready for collective action. This presentation moves around the role played by Facebook and Twitter to bring about political change in Egypt during the Egyptian Uprising of 2011. Drawing insights from Clay Shirky (2008) and Zeynep Tufekci (2014) and others on media politics and Foucauldian discourse of power (1987) to show how power operates horizontally, this analysis exposes the tussle between the autocratic Egyptian government led by the then President Hosni Mubarak and Egyptian citizens and scrutinizes the horizontal connectivity and dissemination of information, citizen journalism, pervasive nature of power and multiple resistance sites. In materializing their aspirations of right, liberation, and justice along with the economic, social, and political revamp, Egyptian civilians took recourse in digital technologies and freed themselves from the thirty-year long dictatorship of Mubarak. My argument here is that the co-existence of digital technologies and social movements can contribute for a great change. Social media sites provide a virtual forum for the intellectual, socio-political discussion and accretion of awareness among the users which by uniting stifled and ignored voices, can initiate, and accelerate the protest movement to safeguard people's rights.

Keywords: social media sites, digital technology, right, justice