

## **The Instagram Induced Voyueristic Propaganda About Women Liberation And Its Resulting Damage On User Psychology**

**A comprehensive study of urban elite millennial in Kolkata, India and the influence of their inter dependency on 'Instagram' in shaping their outlook towards feminine gender role conventions.**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

India as a country amidst the crashing GDP is however fast evolving digitally. The Urban elite especially, are engrossed in a digital world way more than they ever were and a generation of its own is slowly inclining towards an "Instagram induced way of survival". The millennial elite media platform, 'Instagram' is growing by leaps and bounds amidst the current crisis, there is a growth in its usage and interdependency on the platform for both information and entertainment has severely increased. This could be attributed to the factor that it is a media platform that is extensively catering to almost every possible psychological need of a human. However, this exhaustive involvement with the platform has also resulted in shaping the outlook of its actively engrossed users especially with context to the way that glamorized voyeurism has become the new normal and has also successfully paved way for a "new age" propaganda surrounding feminism and conventions about women liberation. We are rather dissolving, not developing with the outcrop of feminism and that is an unfortunate thing to deal with. Manushi Chhillar, winner of a beauty pageant made India more proud than Mary Kom as a sports person could ever do, Priyanka Chopra, as an actress is more of a feminist than Kiran Mazumder Shaw as a scientist or Kiran Bedia an IPS officer could ever be and unfortunately we are deceived into the propaganda based algorithm churning behind the platform of hearts, likes and shares. It is true that every success story deserves an applaud to be able to influence many others but the biasedness towards a certain type of success results in ignorance towards many others, This ultimately ends up shaping a media narrative of its own that becomes a part of socially acceptable conventions and norms. The millennial has all been so easily engulfed in a world of glamour and glitz because of their exposure to the platform that they have lost track of all the diversified aspects of women empowerment and feminism and instead have gifted themselves and the future generations to come, the gender biased struggle of body shaming and edited perfection for the eyes to please. When we first think of the term social media, especially an Instagram feed, we are bombarded with the latest magazine photo shoot of celebrities that haunt us or better still fan pages and posts dedicated to the supremacy of the tinsel town beauties, their extreme struggles stories and exhaustive citizen journalism about the same. It's almost as if we are deceived in this millennial age to believe that the only struggle that women have to face in the era of the peak of feminism is the struggle to look acceptable for a digitally acceptable way of voyeurism and to be able to make a stand like the tinsel town beauties on grounds of exhibitionism, personal affairs and choices of cinema.

The entire purpose behind choosing this topic would be to go in depth into a world of propaganda so subtly hidden in Instagram under layers of glamorization. If we fail to utilize a platform that has less of a power and monetarily influenced hierarchical structure to deal with then the social media that is supposed to be born out of the mass and for the mass fails to do justice to movements that deserve real attention.

This article will be in perspective accordance with the subjective analysis of the growth of a social media platform like Instagram and its contribution in shaping a narrative that's destructive to the growth of women liberation movement and user psychology in general.

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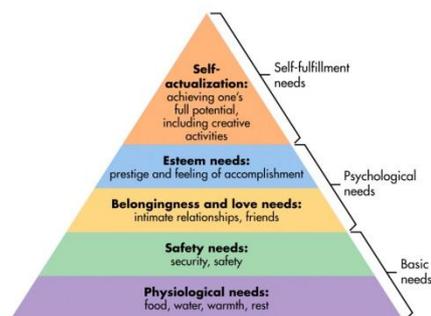
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## I. INTRODUCTION:

The influence of a platform like Instagram on an entire generation of its own is fast evolving into a life line of sorts. It no more serves the purpose of a mere social media platform instead it is now a way of survival for its loyal users who are addicted to its versatility of features. It is keeping them hooked and engaged in a world of its own but its contribution is often debated on grounds of the lack of ethical filtration of content, however irrespective of the criticism, its deepening impact is worth analyzing. Instagram, is one of the most popular social networks on a global level. The US has the most users at 116 million, followed by India at 73 million and Brazil at 72 million. 35% of those making less than \$30k use Instagram, 39% of those making \$30k–74,999 use Instagram, 42% of those making more than \$75k use Instagram (chen, 2020) establishing why exactly is the platform known as the ‘gram’ for the elite. The economy of most of its users on a global level surpasses that of the average standard of basic economy. The situation in a third world country like our, is no different. Unlike Facebook and TikTok that’s catering to a much diversified audience, platforms like Twitter or Instagram is more restricted with its target audience approach. While Twitter is for the intellectual elite, Instagram targets the millennial users for its fun and casual style of networking.

It is true that while the majority of the people struggle for bread and butter and basic amenities like shelter and water, the need for psychological stability pertaining to the lack of socializing and belongingness becomes a secondary concern however Instagram, has its own way of dealing with the psychological massacre caused amongst people. It’s a successful model that deals with the sense of fulfillment that arises out of a virtual escapade. It isn’t quite good at dealing with the ground reality, it isn’t the one keeping people updated with minute by minute bombardment of accurate data either, it isn’t a platform that filters out content on an ethical and sensible ground and it surely isn’t curing people from any pertaining disease. Yet the platform is doing its bit in handling people in a way that’s engaging and rewarding in a manner like no other. It caters to the basic need of gratification of a human, a need psychologically so strong that it camouflages for the need of other survival instincts. Uses and gratification theory of communication explains how people use media to fulfill their needs. The need for Gratification is the most important role of media for humans. People get knowledge, interact, relax, get awareness, escape and get entertainment through media which they use for interpersonal communication as well. The theory was introduced by Blumler and Katz in 1974 in the article “the Uses of Mass Communications: Current Perspectives on Gratifications Research” and focuses its attention on media users’ roles. (Bajracharya, 2018). It is the users themselves who are choosing to actively involve themselves with a certain media platform against the availability of many others. It is in contradiction to other theories that revolve around the assumption that media platforms prey on consumers in a manner that is one-directional and engulfing without the active voluntary involvement of the receivers. The UGT (users and gratification theory) theory assumes that the audience wants to be informed, educated, relate with characters, entertainment, enhance social interaction and escape from the stresses of daily life. These are the broad classifications of needs and desires based on which a person makes a conscious choice of preferring to be involved with one media platform over the others. When it comes to understanding of it in relation to the current situation, it is likely that people seem to gain satisfaction from a certain platform that is versatile in pertaining to every need and desire that humans have from a media platform in general while balancing out the fun and serious quotient attached to it. Instagram, as a platform mostly caters to an elite urban class of millennial. India’s urban youth spends more time on social media compared to their elderly counterparts, with Instagram emerging as the favorite among the youngest lot, shows a recent survey conducted by market research firm YouGov in collaboration with Mint. While Facebook remains the most popular social media platform among the millennials, Instagram beats Facebook among Generation Z. Millennials refer to those who attained adulthood in the early twenty first century, and grew up at a time when the world increasingly became digitally connected. In this analysis, millennials refer to those born between 1981 and 1996 or those aged 22 to 37 years in 2018. Those born after 1996, i.e. those aged 21 years or below, are here referred to as the Gen Z (Kwatra, 2018). This emphasises on how Instagram is successfully overtaking other social media platforms, for the millennial generation and beyond.

There is a theory by Maslow known as the hierarchy of needs and in that theory after the physiological and safety and security, comes the need for love, belonging and self-esteem. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory in psychology comprising a five-tier model of human needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid. Needs lower down in the hierarchy must be satisfied before individuals can attend to needs higher up. From the bottom of the hierarchy upwards, the needs are: physiological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. (McLeod, 2020)



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs(Mcleod, 2020)

For the millennial, belonging to the urban sector, the need for food, shelter, health and income are mostly taken care of either by the virtue of a financially stable guardian or by their own means of access to stances of better than average medium of employment pertaining to better access to quality of education and skill learning and henceforth resulting with better income sources. Therefore, when these people are coming online, they are looking for friendship amidst isolation, a sense of connection in the time of distancing, a boost of confidence and validation from others in times of embracing the harsh economic, physical and psychological reality of a global pandemic. For all of these psychological needs, Instagram, comes to the forefront. There is something called instant gratification, where someone desires for something and wants to attain pleasure and satisfaction almost immediately from the concerned source of gratification. Instagram, seems to fit the bill when it comes to catering to that need for instant gratification. The kind of gratification that it gives isn't long term to say the very least, it isn't voluntary in the long run either. Once exposed to the platform, people are intertwined in a loop of pleasure seeking activities that involve entertainment in the form of a voyeuristic escapade. When a person logs into their Instagram account, they are exposed to the life of others, private and intimate life. Sometimes its pretentious, sometimes it's the naked truth. People post about the most random things on Instagram, and unlike Facebook, it's just visual communication. Pictures and videos do the talking on Instagram. It could be said that it just makes every viewer relate more because the impact of visuals is larger but it could also be analyzed as the power of a platform to make voyeurism acceptable for the person being exposed to the entire process. It's a unique platform that makes voyeurism pleasurable for both the viewers and the content maker. Its even helping them extend their circles beyond barriers or borders. Its keeping them sane by acknowledging their existence via likes, posts and comments by the peer watchers and most importantly its helping them stay entertained in a way that's reminisce of real life socializing behavior. Coming to the versatility part of the 'gram', the platform does a decent job in keeping the millennial updated about global events as well. While it is debatable that it isn't a conventional platform for the propagation of accurate information, it is still worth the mention for its diversity of its usage. Instagram users, are mostly centric around the young digital generation, they aren't the ones to stay hooked to traditional media platforms by virtue of their early exposure to internet. They have been exposed to the digital world quite early on in their life and their compatibility with digital platforms is way higher than that to a television or a radio. When this generation is exposed to Instagram, their interdependency on the platform psychosocially is also shaping their outlook towards many different aspects of life. Their outlook towards women empowerment and liberation is one very important aspect of it.:"Usage and contentment usually lie together to the comparatively more philosophical media assumptions, having confessed about its impacts. Usage and content theory recommends that purchasers are effectively picking explicit content as per their choice. If there are any impacts, they are deliberately planned. Notwithstanding, uses and satisfaction hypothesis could be believed to work at two dimensions of reflection and unpredictability. Firstly, U&G hypothesis can be viewed as a mammoth pattern, which specialists can join as per needs and demand. Secondly, it tends to be viewed as riddle, in which befuddling multifaceted pieces fit together for a particular perspective. Primary comprehension is progressively common, whereas the secondary is comparatively grounded.

Blumler and Katz probably figured the most punctual abstract of this hypothesis, taking unprecedented point of view on impact of media. It was hypothesized that persons match and blend as per objectives, social foundations, needs etc. In this way, people are viewed as dynamic members. As per Derek Lane, "uses and gratification theory suggests that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media. Uses and gratifications assume that the user has alternate choices to satisfy their need."The agenda setting hypothesis examines the broad networking influences over a particular target. The open objective is the principle center to be worried about. McCombs and Shaw (1972) first utilized the word plan setting. Not just restricted to such, the dialog additionally covers on how the broad communications hues a specific occasion for their media groups of onlookers (Matsaganis and Payne: 2005). In this way, the broad communications can be considered as mindful in impacting and forming the popular feeling and motivation. Such impact of broad communications on the open plan or feeling can happen deliberately or accidentally (Iyengar and Kinder: 1987). Persistently, the plan setting

hypothesis remains as vital hypothesis on mass correspondence, however reaches out to other related sociology concentrates, for example, political correspondence (Reese: 1991). In any case, broad communication has a specific control over adding to or impacting the audience's recognitions, qualities, center and needs. With such impact from the broad communications, the media gatherings of people will in general structure their very own feeling or spotlight on those issues that are considered as deserving of consideration on their psychological motivation (Littlejohn and Foss: 2009). The agenda setting theory talks about the power of media in deciding a fixed propaganda to propagate in the minds of the public, in our instance the media is the social media in particular while emphasizing specifically on Instagram and the propaganda is faux feminism and women empowerment that is propagated via it, the tinsel town celebrities and Instagram influencers are the opinion leaders who have huge influence over the social media users thus paving way for the two step model, social media especially Instagram is shown to being used increasingly and the dependency of the millennial on social media for their emotional and psychological need and validation in accordance to user and gratification theory makes new media especially social media an extremely important tool that is affecting the mindset of hundreds of women in the most negative way courtesy of its increased usage and resulting influence. The very word feminism has a debatable origin, however in reference to Mukhopadhyay Arpita: *Feminisms*, 2016, "The term feminism can be traced back to 1871, when it was used as a medical term to define symptoms of 'feminisation' of the bodies of male patients. In 1872, Alexander Dumas used it in a pamphlet titled *l'homme femme*, to identify women who behaved in a masculine way." The gender battle has been long fought for, its almost as old as the human civilization itself, while it started off as a battle to get equal political and educational rights and economical rights as its opposite gender counterpart, it very soon took a U turn with its propaganda and purpose at large, it has over the decades quickly shifted its base to an aggressive male bashing phenomenon of some sorts and with the evolution of the digital age and the rise of social media platform like the Instagram, the women decided to uproot the origin of purpose of the very word "feminism" and the ideologies associated with it conventionally and unfortunately the new media never ended up doing much justice to the battle that was so ferociously fought for over decades. The youth especially aged between their late teens to mid twenties are having maximum access to internet and this is also the age group that seems to make sense out of everything that is happening on the internet, however they seem to ignore the things that should matter too, like sexism that is cropping up and growing in leaps and bounds, gender hatred, hate speech, sexist and lewd comments have slowly but steadily replaced content on the internet that should have mattered instead. There is sexism in individual posts and sexism in posts released by celebrities and influencers online and we are unknowingly contributing to its popularity. The same instances have occurred in Instagram when, users have encountered thousands of fan pages, and reposts contributing to the popularity of glamorized tinsel town mode of feminism and women empowerment which is synonymous with cooperative celebrity husbands, promoting attires and its irrelevant correlation with liberation, being able to work after marriage by virtue of a significant other, or doing films that are dedicated to real life superheroes and gaining more popularity than they could ever get in their whole life. Scroll through the search feed and newsfeed of Instagram and the picture of Manushi Chhillar making India proud appears seventy times more than Mary Kom's iconic fifth time medal, the legacy of Aishwarya Rai Lingkar while the legacy of Arunima Sinha hardly ever made it to the social media inspirational posts. While the top heroines and TV actresses have multiple fan clubs associated with them on these social media, . Bhakti Sharma, Puja Thakur, Tania Sachdev could possibly find themselves in general knowledge questions in central or state examinations considering their lack of visibility in the minds of the ever active digital mass. Citizen journalism should have taken a new leap with its women empowerment propaganda through the use of new media but instead it backfired to end up becoming a medium of photoshop, picture editing, body shaming and psychological degradation of women at large, leading to more harm than good. Almost always we inevitably escape the fact that we live in a country that is clearly obsessed about its glamour industry. It is almost as if we live under a tinsel town authoritarian rule and we fail to recognize the immense level of psychological dominance it has on our lives starting from our choice of clothing to our very basic framework of our lifestyle, we have predominantly let our guards down when it comes to being blindfolded by the glitz and glamour of the industry. Another thing that has come up amidst the gender battle is the superwoman syndrome and well Superwoman Syndrome is a massacre, the influence of social media with all its glory and perfection has forced the woman to think, act and react in a certain way and that action has to be perfect, women are bound to be perfectionist, they need to be able to handle household chores, job profiles and still manage to look their best and make everything look feasible and easy, lest they fail, and the pressure is building up at a constant rate for women all over the world especially for the ones who have dared say a word and tried to spread their claws and reach against patriarchy to make a stand of their very own. The social media has quite appropriately bridged the gap between the reel and real and has helped the celebrities post and create world of their own as they would love to show it. And this largely helps because at the end of the day, people believe what they own to see and if they are shown a world of glamour beyond the glamour industry, they tend to believe in that quite easily, and the encapsulation of the attention of audience increases thus resulting in the

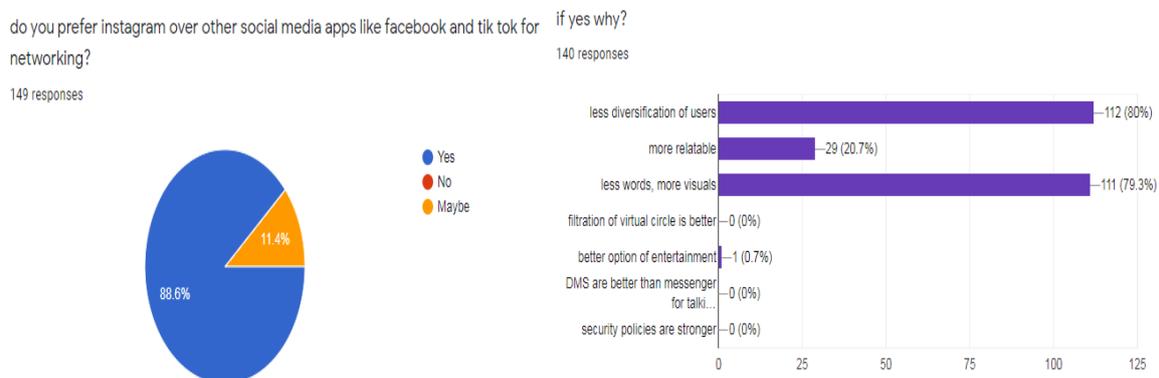
increase in the credibility. Platforms like Instagram has officially gained such credible status for this particular reason that each picture, with its background is considered real and unedited , this gives the celebrities a perfect platform to subtly advertise themselves the way they actually want to But when we combine all these diversified factors, we get to a point where it automatically becomes easier to conclude about how the interplay of the platform along with the involvement of the opinion leaders in the form of the celebrities has gone beyond the use of social media as a mere recreational tool, it has instead over the years developed as a tool of mass persuasion and mass manipulation considering it’s extreme strength and power and reach over the mass, the digital media has over the years proved again and again about its strength and growth and versatility when it comes to addressing audiences of diversified nature, many a times.

## II. SURVEY AND ANALYSIS

The proposed study was carried out in Kolkata. A sampling design was used to select 204 persons for the survey among them 51% are female and 49% are male. The survey is studied for two age groups. One is in between 18-25 and the other one is 25-30. The ratio of 18-25 and 25-30 age groups are 54.9% and 45.1%, respectively from total sample size 204.

To better validate the study and to make it open for further research about its extended possibilities, a small quantitative study was conducted in accordance with the purpose of the following article. A small survey sample of around 150 respondents had been selected through a simple random sampling method. Although a rough age group had been predetermined (the millennial and gen z) (preferably 18-28), although millennial age group can be extended beyond the age 28, however it’s a preferable sample that has been taken into account for this particular survey. The study can be extended further with better detailed analysis in future. To fit the study’s purpose, the specifications had not been limited and it was left to be. The emphasis however was to establish how Instagram is a more preferable platform, indicating its future sustainability in the app market .This indicates scope for future research in this specific area of study. The study was conducted in the city of Kolkata, a metropolitan in India and it serves as an explanatory sample for future study of other metropolitan cities as well. This was done deliberately because the study focuses on the urban sector and the metro cities constitute of a major chunk of it. The sample serves as an epitome of an urban societal structure as the sample mostly was circulated via renowned institutions and through popular elite millennial hangout places in Park Street within the city therefore catering to the other important aspect of the study which is the economical and class barrier. This was to ensure their involvement with the app is way higher because of their basic needs being secured in one of the most enviable way possible courtesy of their economic background. There was no distinction made based on gender because there is no gender biasness in the study conducted and it doesn’t quite impact the effectiveness of the result of the survey conducted either.

When the approximate 200 respondents had been given the option to choose the two most used social media platforms among an array of options the users with the clear majority have voted for Facebook(99%) and Instagram(96.6%) against the the other media platforms, this is important to know that when we are dealing with a particular type of propaganda being propagated through particular forms of media , it is important to understand first about its widespread usage, this helps magnify the impact of the scenario Out of the 200 respondents surveyed , a 100% majority has supported the view point that they use social media more than traditional forms of media which indirectly proves the preference level of social media and also the dependence on it.

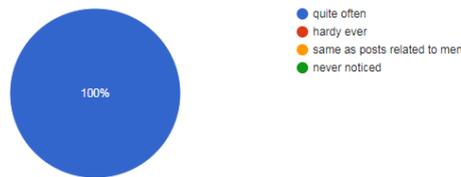


*The Instagram Induced Voyueristic Propaganda About Women Liberation And Its Resulting ..*

A clear 100% says that they often come across post related to women in social media, this proves that women in general are an interesting topic to be talked about and shared on social media, however its contribution to empowerment is yet to be discussed. Unfortunately a clear majority supports and shares the fact that almost all post related to women are dedicated to the entertainment industry. Unfortunately the respondents support the view point that because of the entertainment industry becoming the central focus of attention when it comes to posts related to women, the to other fields are getting subdued in the process. women belonging This is in direct correlation to the fact the ignorance of the true meaning of feminism and the occupancy of the glamour industry to be able to propagate a propaganda of it's own. A clear majority of 99.5% have accepted to using social media to post about their lifestyle.

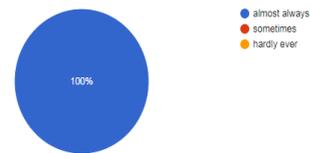
how often do you come across posts related to women on the social media?

203 responses



how often are these posts (related to women) specifically related to the entertainment industry?

203 responses



Clear majority of 99.5% have accepted to the fact that they succumb to the pressure of perfection created by social media especially with the incorporation of glamour into it mostly through the entertainment industry. This question is in direct correlation too the fact that talks about the negative impact of social media .

do you feel that the struggle and stories of women belonging to other fields are being subdued in this process?

202 responses



how often do you use social media to post about your lifestyle (includes glamour, beauty, fashion, luxuries availed and acquired)?

203 responses

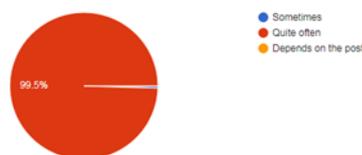


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women are more pressurized in this process . social media has in the name of women centric post propagated glamour to such an extent that instead of doing good it has done more harm to women's self acceptance issue. A clear cut 100% majority support the fact that the users including themselves feel more inclined to engage in a post that involves the entertainment industry, and this is shows how when the users are given a chance to be able to use a media to express their own views and contribute to the propagation of a certain topic, they decide to focus their attention on glamour and propaganda as propagated by the entertainment industry .

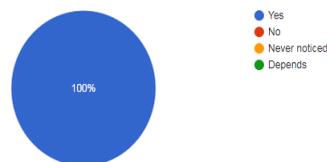
Do you prefer filtering your posts before uploading them on social media?

202 responses



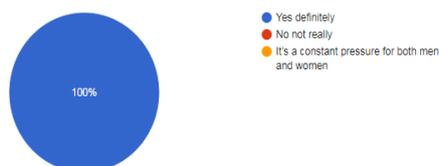
Do you feel that women belonging to the entertainment industry get more engagement on social media than women from other fields ?

203 responses



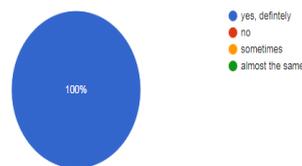
Do you feel that maintaining a perfect image on social media is more prevalent for women than men?

203 responses



do you currently use social media more than the traditional form of media(i.e radio, television, radio)?

203 responses



### III. CONCLUSION

Majority of the respondents believe that the social media has improved the scope for users and celebrities to be able to use the medium for expressing their views without the involvement of any mediators. This has encouraged social media to become a platform for the perfect spread of a self attainedpropaganda. While traditional media was always known for its biased political propaganda owing to their economical dependency on the same, it seems propaganda surrounding new age conventions about gender stereotyping has taken a center seat when it comes to social mediaand the psychological dependency on the same. Amidst all of which women empowerment still remains a diluted issue as social media has over the time became a tool for the propagation of a propaganda as preached by the glamour industry to its huge loyal fan base. The tinsel town has successfully made it a platform of their own, wherein everything that they do say and suffer about becomes the center focus of discussion and everything else takes a back seat .The whole process has not just subdued the entire process of feminism but has also narrowed it all down to only a side of it with a fixed angle and propaganda which is ultimately resulting in an acute negative impact on women in all possible ways. It is unfortunate that women have been victimized so farand instead of promoting self confidence and empowerment, it has instead promoted lack of it. India as a nation is by default quite obsessed with the entire entertainment industry in general, and seemingly so the entertainment industry ends up finding good enough ways to market themselves successfully.What remains unfortunate is the fact that the propaganda is being propagated througha medium where the users had the power to decide and contribute to the popularity of any type of content.

India as a nation since centuries has ignored the existence and productivity and purpose of women, amidst all the rage of women empowerment that is happening across the world. It is important to bring to notice that how India which is fast pacing towards embracing itself as digital India.Social networking sites which are fast raging has made available a new form of feminism, a form of women development and women empowerment, that has quite successfully jeopardized the original meaning of it.However it's not just the celebrities who are creating a havoc of a problem with the incorporation of social media into their lives, it is also the mass themselves. Social media is platform that had the potential of promoting citizen journalism, gave a mouthpiece to the general mass that complained of being too over burdened with propaganda based hierarchy that existed in the traditional form of media, however when the mass was entitled with the power to promote and propagate viewpoints and ideas that had the potential to influence the mass, it chose to focus on topics which are superficial and contradictory to things and matters that deserve to be prioritized and promoted accordingly,

Social media is a platform that is being used to propagate a certain form of feminism andcertain professions are glamourized and an extravagant lifestyle of a female celebrity is being idolised by youngsters of today.Their stories of respective struggles and hindrances incurred and success gained at the end of the day is circulated as stories of inspiration and motivation, and it is definitely worth noticing however when it is done at the cost of other women and the stories of other women belonging to other fields and profession , it leads to a predetermined propaganda that hampers the progress as a whole.

We have women becoming mountaineers and world class athletes, women struggling to crack an IAS examination and women battling several odds to become a pilot, however what remains remorseful is the way the diversification of success and struggle stories are dealt with.

Thus we are bombarded with actresses making infidelity synonymous with women liberation ,nudity promoted as being synonymous with empowerment and the glamour industry and the extravagant lifestyle the ultimate stereotyped aim of women in general.

Unfortunately the negative impact do not stop at this only, the other major negative impact is the way the entire glamour industry and it's point tip toe perfection is adversely affecting the mindset of young women and men alike,

Social media platforms like instagram, promote edited perfection as reality , since the medium caters to large mass, perfection is promoted and this perfection is strangling reality, resulting in a pressure that is strongly engulfing the young women into a world of pseudo perfection. Women are expected to look and behave in a certain way and the importance of such has increased manifold and it has taken precedence over using the platform for sharing of information.

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