Citizenship in the Era of Digitization

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Abstract

This paper deals with the notion of citizenship and how the concept has undergone a change with the advent of digital technologies. It aims to understand as to how digital technologies have created newer notions of citizenship and whether they have made the overall practice plural in terms of engagement. The paper also highlights the newer kinds of challenges that have emerged out of the same.

Introduction

The notion of digital citizenship has emerged due to the impact of new media technologies where the idea of nation state is no longer relevant due to the blurring of territorial boundaries defining a citizen. Digital citizenship offers the freedom to an individual who is residing anywhere in the world, to engage and carry out collective decisions for the welfare of his or her own community. Even in the case of political decision making, digital citizenship through online polling can help citizens decide whom to vote for and why. However, such changes have mostly been observed in the first world countries where the people own the necessary infrastructure to gain access. In the case of India, we may find infrastructure as a constraint hindering accessibility and therefore, attempt to understand the positive aspects of the notion of digital citizenship may appear quite challenging. It is further imperative to understand as to whether the notion of digital citizenship can actually be considered relevant in Indian context where people face problems not only in terms of accessibility to infrastructure but also in terms of poor educational and basic skills for effective operation, which can be some of the necessary pre-conditions for operating in such spaces.

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It is, therefore, necessary to understand the very notion of citizenship and to what extent it has been impacted by new media technologies in creating the scope for exercising citizenship, digitally.

"Citizenship" differs to a great extent when it comes to comparing the theoretical meaning and its practical applicability. Whenever the term citizenship has come up, it has largely been assessed politically i.e., the right to vote or choose the government in a democratic society. However, it is equally important to address the civil and social elements of citizenship as well as to acquire a holistic perspective for any citizen within the society. Further, civil element comprises of rights which provide an individual opportunities to exercise freedom as social element offers the scope to access the economic welfare schemes and social heritage of the society. Though these rights present in citizenship do provide a sense of security, these rights have been in constant struggle with the critical elements of the society including the social and economic aspects.

Although the rights try to bring the individual to an equal level socially; there exists a complexity in terms of the economic aspects. For instance, if an individual as citizen of a country has the right to property, then it does not necessarily mean that the individual will be granted a piece of land by the state. The person may only be able to exercise it if s/he has the economic power to purchase land. In the case of India, it is generally perceived that people who stand high in terms of their social and material positioning enjoy far greater preference to exercise their rights as citizens, whereas those who belong to the marginalized classes, though sharing the same set of rights as the well off classes, are either ignored or excluded. This strange complexity of inclusion and exclusion is a primary factor which citizenship has not been able to address in absolute.

Strangely in India, despite adequate social and political conditions laid down by the state for effective citizenship, certain aspects of society, such as class, ethnicity, gender, and caste etc. often determine the degree of inclusion/exclusion of people as citizens.

New media technologies may provide an impression that with its integration within the larger society, the issues of inclusion and exclusion within citizenship can be effectively addressed. Since these technologies are providing the people boundaryless space to engage in the share of information like their opinions and thoughts on any matter of public interest, it removes the social restrictions or boundaries that exist within the physical space of any society. Media technologies also offer the scope to leapfrog the hurdles and incorporate the citizens who were earlier marginalised. It is important to keep in mind that such technology has emerged from the developed countries which have been adopted in the developing countries without properly understanding the preconditions required to create/provide the right channels for development. It is also important to understand whether such technologies are providing the actual freedom to the people to exercise their rights or is it merely a modern toy designed to offer easier scope for surveillance.

Also the most important argument is whether such kind of engagement on virtual space can be considered equivalent or relevant to the traditional forms of citizenship.

Interpreting the Notion of Citizenship

The concept of "citizenship" emerged in ancient Greece. It was incepted from the idea of "Polis" which was also interpreted as city-state. Significantly, the notion of citizenship shares a strong bond with the idea of nation state. Nation state is defined as a state that identifies itself as driving towards political legitimacy through serving as a sovereign entity. Nation here signifies a sovereign territorial unit. The state is seen as a political and geopolitical entity. The term nation state implies the coinciding of these two terms geographically.

Citizenship can be understood as the privileges of membership of a particular kind of political community, one in which those who enjoy a certain status are entitled to participate on an equal basis with their fellow citizens in making the collective decisions that regulate their social life (Bellamy & Palumbo, 2010). It interprets the notion of citizenship in terms of political participation in a democratic society. This is also the

traditional notion of citizenship. Citizenship over the course of time has evolved like the political aspect of citizenship can be one way of understanding citizenship. However, there have emerged multiple other aspects which provide different meanings to the overall notion of citizenship. This is because the nature of the democratic political community and the qualities needed to be a citizen have also undergone a change over the course of time.

Citizenship in the contemporary context, implies the capacity of the people to participate in both the political and socio-economic life of the community. The citizens should have a sense of belonging to a particular territorial region in which they reside and the ability to recognize the centre of power entitled to regulate their behaviour. Therefore, a working democracy may require some elements of common civic culture, broad acceptance of the legitimacy of the prevailing rules of politics and a common language or languages for effective political debate. Also the degree of trust and solidarity amongst the citizens is necessary. There are three key elements pivotal for citizenship, 1) membership of a democratic political community; 2) the collective benefits and rights associated with membership and 3) participation in the community's political, economic and social processes. Keeping all these aspects in mind, citizenship may be understood as a condition for civic equality which consists of membership of a political community where all the citizens can determine the terms and benefits of social cooperation on an equal basis. This status will not only secure equal rights to the enjoyment of the collective goods provided by the political association but will also involve equal duties to promote and sustain them (Bellamy & Palumbo, 2010).

Scholars, however, have argued that the traditional notion of citizenship holds a far greater importance in society since it involves the process of voting which is pivotal for any democratic society to function and sustain. It is only through political participation that the collective interests and pursue for public goods, gets holistically addressed. Democracy would matter as it is the prospect of influencing the government policy according to reasonably fair rules and on a more or less equal basis with others that form the distinguishing mark of the citizen.

The participation involved for the citizens would result in the setting up of the political framework which would help in regulating the social and economic life along with various other political institutions such as the legal system, police, bureaucracy etc. This very framework will also provide a sense of security to the key actors i.e., the citizens and help create stable conditions for various forms of social interactions. The social and moral dispositions that are linked to citizenship can be considered as important supplements to any political framework. Rules and regulations cannot cover everything and their being followed cannot depend on coercion alone. The political regulations can help in coordinating the people's interactions in ways which would allow them to know where they stand in regard to others (Kabeer, 2005). Therefore, political involvement of the citizens would help in shaping the framework and achieving these objectives.

However, in terms of political participation, a large number of individuals would comprise of the free riders who would reap the benefits derived from the struggle by few. Scholars argue that these very actors who are the free riders (which also include the non-citizens) would ultimately have to engage in issues if it affects them individually to an adverse degree. Being citizen of a particular country would empower these actors to critically engage with these issues and reiterate to the political leaders that they do not hold control over others but as a matter of fact are controlled by these actors to ensure that the public's interest is getting fulfilled (Mohanty& Tandon, 2006)

T.H. Marshall has explained that in the emergence of the notion of citizenship, civil rights came first and then it was followed by political rights. Social rights which garnered relevance in the 20th century earlier did not witness much of growth. Though he argues that the civil and social elements are pivotal parts of citizenship, they require the support of the political element. He emphasizes on this argument because he relates citizenship to status which in a society should be equal with respect to the rights and duties with which status is endowed. He tries to point out that there cannot be any universal principle to determine those rights and duties in a society. A developing institution may create an image of an ideal citizenship against which the achievement can be measured and

towards which aspirations can be directed (Marshall, 1950, p. 150). For him, citizenship should ultimately fulfill the primary principle of equality.

Debates on Citizenship and Rights

Rights in citizenship can be seen as the defining criteria. It is important to identify those rights that citizens acknowledge if they are to be treated as free individuals worthy of equal concern and respect. It is also important to identify those rights that are necessary if the citizens are to participate in democratic decision-making on free and equal terms (Bellamy & Palumbo, 2010).

Rights, as individual entitlements, are claims individuals can make against others which also include the government. However, though rights are attached to the individuals, they have an important collective dimension that links them with citizenship. The rights invoke certain goods as being important for human beings to be able to lead a life that reflects their own free choices and effort. For the rights to be on equal basis for all, the social relations should be accordingly organized. However, these rights can only be provided by people who accept certain civic duties that ensure they are respected, including cooperating to set up appropriate collective arrangements. These rights depend on some form of political community in which citizens seek fair terms of association to secure those goods necessary for them to pursue their lives on equal terms with others. Rights should have the ability to transcend the boundaries of any political community and not depend on either membership or participation. In this respect, citizenship forms the 'right to have rights' by placing in citizens' own hands, the ability to decide which rights they will provide for and how (Bellamy & Palumbo, 2010).

As to the debates on rights in citizenship, the liberal-individualist conception of citizenship, which identifies citizenship as 'status', points out that the emphasis on status gives rise to a language of 'needs' and 'entitlements'(rights) for human dignity and makes individuals effective agents. Individuals as citizens are sovereign and morally autonomous beings. Their duties are to respect the similar rights of the other citizens, who come to the defense of the polity when it is under threat, etc.

The liberal- individualist conception of citizenship could be interpreted as a political conception. It is so because it calls individuals as sovereign and morally autonomous beings, who choose whether or not to exercise the rights of the status of citizen in the public or in any political arena. It holds that the rights exist essentially in individuals as they are both logically and morally prior to the society and the state. Without rights the individuals will not have the capacity to be effective agents (Bellamy & Palumbo, 2010).

The liberal-individualist conception, however, does not impose any duties for the individuals as citizens beyond the minimal civic ones and that of respecting other individuals as sovereign and autonomous citizens. It understands that in any form of public or political involvement, the citizens would have a choice and largely they would seek to be left alone by the society and the state. They would do no more than enjoy the privileges and the freedom of their status in a private realm. This conception of citizenship would create no social bond, beyond that of a contract nor any social solidarity or cohesion (Bellamy & Palumbo, 2010).

The civic-republican conception of citizenship, on the other hand, emphasizes on practice which gives rise to a language of 'duties' whose discharge is necessary to establish individuals as citizens among other citizens. It could be understood as a communally based conception of citizenship, where individuals are only citizens as members of a community. They require some form of empowerment to be able to act as citizens and they can retain their autonomy only if it is exercised not just with respect for others' autonomy but also in accordance with a practice which is socially defined and which they have a duty to engage in. Here the social bonds between citizens are based upon sharing and determining the way of life (Bellamy & Palumbo, 2010).

The civic-republican conception does not consider citizenship as status but a 'practice' or an activity. It is by acting that the individuals demonstrate that they are citizens. In civic republicanism, the practice of citizenship is a shared responsibility for the identity and continuity of a particular political community. It is not the responsibility which the individuals can as citizens, choose to take or not, for it is in the exercise of the

responsibility that they both become and remain citizens. Here the term 'private citizen' becomes an oxymoron.

Under civic-republicanism, citizens have to be empowered similarly like in the liberal-individualist conception of citizenship. They may require many of the civic, political and legal freedoms and many of the entitlements to health, education and income which may appear as rights in the liberal- individualist conception but may be in the nature of conditions in the latter. The civic republicanism emphasizes on the institutional settings for the practice of rights to be appropriate.

In the context of India, what can be understood is that the citizens would have to exercise their duties in order to have access to their privileges and rights. The duties would help in sustaining these rights. It would be necessary to regard the duties prior to rights as well as the condition for rights. The liberal individualist conception would appear to be unfit as the Indian society is diverse and there are many types of expectations from the citizens of different backgrounds.

Marshall (1950) has pointed out that a society affected by capitalism, creates inequalities to a certain degree. Here, the rights do not conflict with the inequalities as they are supposed to. They, on the other hand, become necessary to the maintenance of the form of inequality that exists in the society. There exists a social class which is in constant conflict with the rights within citizenship as the social class gets identified largely through material ownership of an individual which in a society is unequally distributed. In the modern society, the very aim of citizenship is to try and bring people equally in terms of status, but the problem arises with the involvement of power. The single uniform status provided by the citizenship fails to tackle the issue of power. It, instead, provides the foundations of equality on which the structure of inequality can be built. The social and material positioning determines the practice of rights of the individuals. To him, rights only confer the legal capacity to strive for the things one would like to possess but it does not guarantee the possession of any of them. Social and material positioning holds the dominance over the rights within citizenship which allows freedom not to the whole of the population. It fails to address the problem of social inequality.

The very reason has resulted in the withdrawal from and attenuation of public services by a certain sections of the people across many democratic societies such as India. In the process, a delusion has been created towards the political aspect of citizenship because the citizens begin to feel that their participation in terms of voting becomes pointless as their representatives (the politicians) elected would only make false promises for the need of power and would essentially cater to the better educated and wealthier sections of the society while ignoring the poorer sections, who, in turn, also find it difficult to organize themselves to engage politically due to the social and economic restrictions created by the class holding the dominant position within the society. A decline in the civic solidarity can be observed here because of these inequalities that have emerged between the different social groups. This further results in decline of the notion of trust in the state apparatuses which is very important from the viewpoint of citizenship as it helps in binding the citizens together and addressing to the collective needs of the community.

Issue of Inclusion and Exclusion within Citizenship
Collaborative and collective participation of citizens is very important in a democratic society. However, due to the conflicts between social position and rights, there emerges a problem of inclusion and exclusion within citizenship which is very much evident in countries like India.

The internal exclusions can be on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender etc, whereas, the external exclusions can be in terms of access to resources provided by the state or other agencies. However, in Indian context, though one may find that the factors like ethnicity, gender, caste and class, may seem to play a role in defining the sense of citizenship, the real factor that can be seen here is the economic factor, i.e., those who appear to be on their way to an economically assured future are more likely to be identified as full citizens than those who appear destined to experience long periods of unemployment or employment in poorly paid, unskilled work.

Even the analysis of the classical liberal theory highlights that all human beings have equal rights by virtue of their humanity as it takes the individual as conceptually and ontologically prior to society and hence being the ultimate bearer of rights regardless of

their status in the society (Kabeer, 2005). It highlights that the economic and social rights entail excessive state intervention which draws public resources and constitutes the infringement of individual liberty.

The excluded groups try to define themselves in different contexts to see themselves in relation to others and what it implies for their understanding of citizenship. There are certain values which they try to associate with the idea of citizenship which helps in cutting across the various boundaries which divides them. These values may not be universal but they are widespread enough to suggest that they constitute a significant aspect of the organization of collective life and of the way in which people connect with each other (Kabeer, 2005). These values are, namely:

1. **Justice:** which revolves around when it is fair for people to be treated the same and when it is fair that they should be treated differently.
2. **Recognition**: of the intrinsic worth of all human beings, but also recognition of and respect of their differences.
3. **Self- Determination**: this refers to people's ability to exercise some degree of control over their lives.
4. **Solidarity**: the capacity to identify with others and to act in unity with them in their claims for justice and recognition.

However, what can be observed here is that in the case of justice, people are discriminated against by the ones who are in authority. For recognition, there exists hegemonic cultural definitions which deny full personhood to certain groups like in the case of Dalits and women in India. In case of self-determination, people's right to self-determination would largely be seen as an object of struggle, and lastly in the case of solidarity, it would appear to take a narrow form, limited to only those who experience the same daily struggles or even more narrowly, to one's own family or kin. However, the key aspect to understand in Indian context is that the excluded groups cannot be considered as homogenous either in the mechanisms by which they are excluded or in their concrete experience of exclusion. Though they may share the similar values, these values would be ranked and interpreted differently by different people at different times.

The idea of universalism of rights to address the issue of inclusion and exclusion cannot be taken for granted. They have to be worked for in different contexts and these very different contexts would help in shaping the concrete forms that are given to abstract rights (Bellamy & Palumbo, 2010). However, what is found is that whenever rights are represented as the rights of the citizens within specific legal, political and state formations, they necessarily take up the particularistic form which in itself contradicts the idea of universality and hence contributes to the issues of exclusion. For instance, in the case of slum dwellers in India, recognized as citizens, their experiences would be a counter to the universalistic notion of citizenship which points that every citizen experiences in the similar manner. In the case of slum dwellers, they would value the right to live with dignity more. Here the universal idea of rights would have to take into consideration whether these people are able to live with dignity in their social relationships as well as with the state.

In the Indian society, the individual rights are enshrined in the constitution, institutions and cultural sensibilities and constitute the backdrop against which much of the daily life is conducted. Yet, individualism as a way of being has little or no place in society where exists a strong sense of kin and community ties, where the individuals meet their needs on the basis of a shared morality of claims and obligations and define their identities in relation to other members of their community. It is due to the kin and ethnic community like the Rajputs, Gujjars or Jats where people turn in for social, political and economic support and this behaviour allows the politicians belonging to different ethnic communities to make huge capital from poverty and excluding the minorities from the representation in the government and from the avenue for material accumulation and access to economic and social facilities (Mohanty & Tandon, 2006).

In case of inclusion of the excluded groups, it is also a complex process in the Indian scenario. It is so because inclusion of weaker sections would mean unequal competition with those who are better equipped socially and materially. It is important to understand that the collective identities that exist are not static. They are dynamic and compete with

each other for material resources as well as for social and political space. However, each identity has its own peculiar character and logic which restricts the mobility of the bearer of the identity. The identities are not getting constructed once but are constantly in the process of reconstruction, being mobilized and manipulated for the purpose of seeking inclusion (Kabeer, 2005).

Identities rooted in the material base do provide the scope for mobility of people and the idea to shift their class position. However, in India, it requires some forms of capability which to a larger extent are dependent on the social positioning which is difficult to change. Without equality of opportunities, equality of rights remains an unrealizable goal for a large number of people.

It is important to understand that whenever exclusion takes place on the basis of historically and socially ascribed identities, inclusion becomes even more difficult and challenging (Mohanty & Tandon, 2006). It can be observed that inclusion in many cases tries to seek legitimacy both from the state and the society. When the state recognizes the deprived and socially ascribed identities and makes special provisions for their inclusion, it takes the first step towards legitimizing the mobilization of their identity directed to get what the state promises and to interrogate it when it fails to deliver. However, there exist inter-group identities, intra-group identities, more than just one identity like in the case of Dalit woman, which identity should be mobilized for inclusion- her being a Dalit or her being a woman, because there is a possibility that one of her identities may get hijacked.

It is pivotal for the state to recognize that people are placed in unequal relationship and enact legislations to equalize the social relationships. The state tries to create conditions for the excluded groups to take part in the political decision making, by improving the capacities and resources being unequally distributed such as, education and employment in the case of the excluded. But still it tends to take sides and display favours to those who exercise dominance. The unequal social and economic relationships people have, get reflected in their relationship with the state. For example, in the case of urban settlement

the rich and upwardly mobile are the ones favoured. Similarly, in the countryside, the landed elites are the favoured ones.

The Idea of Digital Citizenship

The impact of new media technologies to engage, inform and enrich the citizens with vital information which may be of social or political nature has not only reduced the number of distracted citizenry but has also contributed to citizens mobilization. The transformation in the technology has brought about dramatic changes in the socio-political psychology of the average citizen by capturing the diverse elements of interoperability, interactivity, intelligence, portability and communicative capacity associated with the advent of digital revolution. One of the important contributions made by the new media technologies has been the inception and development of the concept of "Digital Citizenship".

Digital citizenship refers to the ability to participate in the society through online means. In simpler terms it refers to the kind of citizenship endowed to an individual who uses the internet to address the various social, civic and political issues that concern them as well as their community (Tolbert, Mossberger & Mcneal, 2008). It is seen as representing capacity having the potential for political and economic engagement in society in the information age.

A digital citizen as identified by Tolbert (2008), Mossberger (2008) & Mcneal (2008) is the individual who makes use of the new media technology like the internet frequently for political information to fulfill their civic duty as well as for their economic gain. An individual to qualify as a digital citizen, he/she must have the extensive skills, knowledge and access to using internet through computers, mobile phones and web-ready devices to interact with private and public organizations. Tolbert (2008), Mossberger (2008) & Mcneal (2008) point out that people characterizing themselves as digital citizens often use information technology extensively by creating online blogs, using social networks and participating in various social issues online.

The authors, however, do not emphasize on the time factor required to identify and fulfill the criterion for an individual to be a digital citizen. The definition appears to be inclined more towards the context of developed countries. Digital citizenship, like any other citizenship, requires the individual to know whether s/he is aware that s/he is a digital citizen or a mere citizen. An individual accessing the internet will not be considered a digital citizen who uses the internet solely for the purpose of entertainment. Unless and until he is aware that he can address or raise issues which affect him as an individual as well as his community and at the same time also raises his voice with the help of internet as a tool of media to sensitize other citizens and mobilize them, it is pointless to consider him as a digital citizen. Time as a factor does not exist. As long as the person is engaging with that issue or accessing the sites or the space concerning it for any amount of time to view and understand the issue, keeping in mind that he is aware that he can also engage and contribute online, he will be considered an active digital citizen.

Digital citizenship is considered as an integral part of inclusion in the larger society rather than just simply providing entertainment, convenience or even economic efficiency. Digital citizenship with the help of internet is able to provide information, skills and networks to all those who are involved and enables them to politically participate. It helps in broadening the access and support equally for any socio-political community (Tolbert, Mossberger & Mcneal, 2008). It allows the representation of diversity of views. It is not being bounded by the boundaries of a state, but allows the representation of views rising outside the state at the same time linking it with the views that are emerging within the territory itself. Hence, this interconnectivity allows access to diversity of views which are not impacted by the social restrictions that exist and greatly empower the citizens through access to multiple views for an active engagement with the state. It also allows the freedom to any local issue to shape into a global concern because of digital citizenship's connection going beyond the territorial boundaries (Hermes, 2006). Because digital citizenship allows for the representation of the diversity of views, it allows the inclusion of the citizens in rational deliberation. Due to the diffusion of information at such a rapid pace by the internet across different regions, the people are not influenced by the concentrated set of ideas or suggestions that emerge. The institutional control over

information has weakened and people have the ability to both produce and receive information at the same time. Thus the diversity of views and limitless space for discussion allow people to engage in debates actively which may not be up to that extent via offline participation (Neuman, Bimber & Hindman, 2010).

A very important aspect of digital citizenship is that people's views are not arranged in a hierarchy. The economic and political influence ceases to exist. Every view or comment that is being shared by the citizen is given equal importance and coverage (Tolbert, Mossberger & Mcneal, 2008).

Digital citizenship in comparison to citizenship provides a sense of security which citizenship may lack as it is dependent upon the state. Digital citizenship allows the citizens to use the virtual space and express their attitudes, desires and needs freely without any fear of repercussions. For instance, an individual raising the issue on the ineffective PDS on virtual space may face less or no threat than if he raises it on the actual ground. Digital citizenship offers far greater anonymity which complements the individual's sense of security and further boosts his morale to be involved in issues that concern him as a citizen. Hence, for minorities it is an appropriate space for expression due to lesser suppression and far greater engagement.

Digital citizenship also offers freedom from different barriers which restrict the involvement of most of the citizens. It offers far greater diversity of views which help in creating greater social and political engagement and participation. Digital citizenship with the help of internet makes the process of learning for the citizens less costly (Tolbert, Mossberger & Mcneal, 2008).

Tolbert (2008), Mossberger (2008) & Mcneal (2008) highlight a very important point in terms of digital citizenship and political participation. Since there is a huge dispersion of information taking place in the virtual space and the degree of discussions and debates that take place, it allows the citizens to decide their political role i.e., the right to vote with ease. With the amount of political debate and discussions that take place online

between opposing parties and the availability of their prospectus with ease reduces the citizens' struggle for becoming well informed in terms of political information to a greater degree. Hence it allows them to take effective measures regarding choice to vote. To them digital citizenship appears to be the evolved form of citizenship in the contemporary context.

Problems of Media Technology & Digital Citizenship, Digital Citizenship vs Political Citizenship and the Digital Divide

Scholars like Pinto (2011), Hermes (2006), Fountain (2003), Neuman (2010), Bimber (2010), Hindman (2010), Simoes & Barriga (2011) though appreciate the advent of digital citizenship due to the impact of new media technologies in developing countries similar to what has happened in the first world countries, they try to highlight that the efforts of simply adopting this model without analyzing it with the changing scenarios has proved to cause more damage than being an advantage.

It can be agreed that participation of the marginalized has been made possible due to the impact of new media technologies as it has created access to knowledge and arenas where the citizens can create and shape content etc. However, it has also resulted in segmentation of the citizens which has led to a decline in the number in the national public spaces and the common public culture. Access to technologies and infrastructure is also limited which affects the capabilities to participate due to the presence of groups or organizations which dominate these new channels as well. The impact of new media technologies has resulted in the combination of information and entertainment leading to a decline in responsibility, responsiveness or accountability within the society (Pinto & Hughes, 2011). It can also be pointed out here that the fundamental openness of digital citizenship and the lack of knowledgeable moderators to structure the debate on social and political issues preclude the sort of deliberation that is expected out of it. It can be very difficult to identify a citizen within digital citizenship as a competent speaker. Also it can be difficult to claim that digital citizenship allows for rational critical discussion and the capacity for collective will formation as internet advances to all kinds of discussions at once where the norms of interaction, the structure of conversation, and the

mechanisms of recruitment to conversation get fragmented (Neuman, Bimber & Hindman, 2010).

As for the issues of inclusion and exclusion associated with citizenship which new media technologies and digital citizenship claim to address, to a greater extent it appears to be superficial in the case of developing nations. Digital citizenship itself has certain conditions that are needed to be fulfilled for an individual to be qualified as a digital citizen like proper skills, education, access to infrastructure etc. If we look at the Indian scenario, the total population of 1.23 billion (2012) out of which only 77% (2013) are identified as literates where only 12% are the active users of new media technology clearly reflecting the issues of participation in India. Majority of people though having the basic knowledge of reading and writing, lack the technical knowhow to engage themselves in the available digital spaces. Even the distribution of skills to operate the electronic devices and digital space is stratified that is, the skills of most digital citizens is higher with common tools and decreases as technological sophistication increases.

There are issues of proper infrastructure which can provide them with the access to new media technologies and digital citizenship. A very important point to highlight here is that setting up of infrastructure to gain access to such technologies may not be cheap for everyone. India still has a very low per-capita GDP, which means that majority of people in India have an average or lower than average income which is not sufficient to own the proper infrastructure for new media technologies. A common trend which is generally prevalent is that whenever a country is impacted by newer technology the people who are economically well off are the ones to take advantage while the marginalized sections are unable to, and become uninterested in doing so (Neuman, Bimber & Hindman, 2010). They rely on the state to provide them with the access to such infrastructure. However, in the case of India, the state is not strong enough to provide every marginal citizen access to new media technologies at a pace compared to the developed countries. This issue in turn results in an information gap between the citizens who are well off and those who are not, which in itself contributes to exclusion. Thus, we understand that despite the claims, it fails to address the issues of inclusion and exclusion effectively as the problem

persists despite the impact of new media technologies. Simoes (2011) points out here that the issue of inclusion and exclusion cannot be addressed by the ICTs as technology cannot extinguish any major social inequality. However, emergence of new media technologies has to an extent increased the degree of inclusion and exclusion within citizenry rather than curbing it.

Another very important aspect of new media technologies and digital citizenship that can be observed is that it claims that it provides a greater space for citizens' engagement without any kind of restrictions or coercive external constraints and most importantly it leads to citizens' mobilization. Interestingly, new media technology within digital citizenship offers windows for surveillance and can easily obstruct the diversity of views (Barriga, Jeronimo & Simoes, 2011). As a result the very claim of digital citizenship and the new media technologies i.e. a sense of security to the citizens and the freedom of diversity of views has failed in the Indian context and reflected that even in digital spaces there existed multiple dominant authorities which were controlling the kind of information flowing through the digital spaces. They shared the ability to restrict the movement of the kind of information which might be unpleasant to their standards and at the same time jeopardize the identity of the digital citizen by creating legal or regulatory hurdles.

Also the emergence of these multiple issues on the digital space has resulted in the segregation of citizens rather than their mobilization. For example, the movements of women empowerment, LGBT movements, same-sex marriage movements etc on the virtual spaces have not led to citizens' mobilization to address these issues as a collective forum. It has rather led to an individualist engagement which can be considered unhealthy for citizenship. The internet can be seen here as a cause for such issue as it creates fragmented digital spaces and results in the fragmentation of the politically focused citizens into a huge number of isolated publics (Neuman, Bimber & Hindman, 2010) (Hermes, 2006). Even in the capacity to influence the agenda of the public discussions, the internet based forums come closest to this ideal, with respect to citizens' ability to shape the agenda of discussion. However, these groups also get disconnected

from the larger agenda of the public sphere. Simoes agrees with this argument as he also highlights that engagement in digital space is socially stratified like in the real world context since it allows for a more selective process of social filtering which can be clearly observed in India. Also the claims of freedom from any kind of barriers and restrictions are not true. Simoes points out here that the social differentiation factors like gender, academic qualifications and professional category which filters citizens' engagement in the real world is also liable to apply in the context of ICTs.

About digital citizenship, the claim that it evaluates the arguments of the citizens by their sincerity and persuasive strength rather than the status of the speaker cannot be considered viable as it becomes difficult to evaluate how often the discussions on digital spaces are actually occurring and whether they have the capacity to sustain the level of discursive equality and reciprocal respect produced by face to face exchanges, which themselves range widely in the society.

Moreover, the citizens' knowledge that they are receiving by being digital citizens may not be as diverse as it claims or seems to be. It has been pointed out that digital spaces also allow for greater surveillance and those with economic power are the ones to firstly engage with it (Neuman, Bimber & Hindman, 2010). It creates issues as to whether the majority of citizens are able to take advantage of the richer information environment and become informed about the different topic as well as whether they are able to receive the correct information, as even here since the well off citizens have greater access, they can ensure that the information entered in the digital space is of that nature which can help them in fulfilling their private interests. So the freedom of views and its diversity may not be what it seems to be.

In terms of political participation, it can be considered that traditional form of engagement would still have a greater relevance in the society than the engagement that has emerged from ICT. In the case of polls that are presented on the digital space for the engagement of digital citizens, we may find that they would have little political meaning or impact. They may inform citizens about each other's views and ideas but in the most

cursory of manners and with few visible results. However, by scientific standards the polls on internet do not represent and qualify as acceptable evidence of the public opinion. It is important to point out here that since there is a freedom of entering any kind of information on the digital space without any proper checks and balances as to how valid that information is, the polls can be devised by unscrupulous means. Here any political activist would have the access and the freedom to convince the people to support his cause for which he has no interest but would project that he has, since the digital spaces lack any kind of mechanism which checks the validity or the authenticity of the information. He can publicize certain personal traits of politics while ignoring the serious issues or policies which would decrease the availability of political information provided to the citizens (Barriga, Jeronimo & Simoes, 2011). Comparing it with political citizenship, even if people are deceived by the poll numbers of any political party or their fake claims, at least they will be able to see in person who the candidate is and whether he is capable of representing them. Digital citizenship would take away such freedom as the citizens on digital platform may not be able to engage themselves with the political representatives that closely. Also the questions raised by the citizens on live platform cannot get ignored whereas in digital space any question by a digital citizen can be removed, altered or ignored.

Digital citizenship cannot substitute political citizenship as voting on the internet is not possible. As we know civic and government in democratic systems like in India rely on voting as a key mechanism of representation and choice through the electoral process. One may argue that internet voting would lead to more civic participation. However, though it may appear to sound easy, voting on the internet would lead to serious challenges that would make the implementation process more difficult (Fountain, 2003). It is important for voting systems to have security, equity, and privacy criteria which in case of internet voting would not be possible. For example, voting from home or office would lead to substantial risks which would undermine the integrity and credibility of the voting process. Also one cannot explain as to what the effects of internet voting might be on civic engagement of the citizens, on the credibility of the electoral process, on the role of deliberation and representation in government, or on political campaigns.

It is also important to highlight that the transformation of the field of political participation, through the use of new technologies like the ICT would not produce significant changes in the political participation. In case of social inequalities and political participation as mentioned before, the ICT would lead to greater engagement of those players who own the infrastructure to operate like the political elites who would make use of the advanced electronic tools to improve their political activity. Such a freedom would be with those who would be able to afford the technology, hence if such a system is adopted then the amount of wealth would decide the number of votes. Citizens' engagement would thus prove meaningless. Also there can be a possibility for the electronic tools to be placed in hierarchical order on the basis of types and levels of political participation. Thus the tool available to the common citizen in comparison to that of elite would very much be weak and provide fewer windows for engagement of the citizen. As a result in any political engagement, any politician can create a target group from which he may garner the votes to win. The collective participation of the citizens would prove meaningless in the process. This in the case of political citizenship is not possible as every citizen has the equal power to politically engage and if stopped can raise his voice in the public which in the case of digital citizenship can be muted.

Lastly, citizens' engagement in the digital spaces cannot be given greater importance than their engagement on actual grounds on issues of social and political nature as the new media platforms amplify the visibility of one cause but do not make people engage in real causes in the real world. That is possible only through political citizenship. One cannot equate the citizens' engagement on the digital space with the citizens' engagement on the grounds (Barriga, Jeronimo & Simoes, 2011). A very recent incident of 16 December 2012, which involved an assault on a girl did not get so much focus by the government and the media because a large section of the people were engaging on the digital space and addressing their views and concerns. It was in fact the protest march at India Gate which led to creation of such an attention. It is pivotal to highlight here that in India the engagement of citizens on digital spaces is not given the same relevance as in the case of their actual engagement on the grounds. Therefore it would be unwise to

claim that digital citizenship can substitute political citizenship. Political Citizenship still has a relevant meaning in the society.

Digital citizenship can further contribute to the emergence of a digital-divide. Interestingly, the notion of digital-divide in the developed countries is understood as proportion of people who are not interested in using the new media technologies for any purpose (Tolbert, Mossberger & Mcneal, 2008). However, in case of India, it can be clearly witnessed that the gap that gets created in terms of citizens' access to digital technologies on the basis of their economic power very much leads to the digital divide. Hence, the very claim of digital citizenship of accessibility for all does not hold true in Indian context as the gap or digital-divide can hinder the citizen's participation and contribute to the creation of inactive citizenry due to the flow of information on digital spaces reaching only a concentrated set of networks or social segments precluding all others.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the traditional notion of citizenship still holds the importance in the Indian society and cannot be ignored in terms of its association with the idea of nation-state. Though it can be agreed that the very notion of citizenship has not remained constant over the period of time and has evolved with the changes in the social, political and technological advances and the notion of digital citizenship has assumed some salience, yet the anchorage of citizenship in the political and social structure of societies remains enduring. It is important to understand that the emergence of digital citizenship with the advent of ICTs cannot play the dominant role; it can, however, help in complementing the political or social citizenship in the Indian scenario.

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