

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE GRACIOUS THE MERCIFUL.

Ash-hadu-allah-ilaha-ila-laahu-Wahdahuu-laasharika-lahu

Wanash-hadu-anna-mohammadan-abduhu-warasuluhu

Ammaa-baadu-fa-uzubillahi-mina-shaituani-rajeem

Bismilaahi-rahmaanir-Rahim.

Our most revered Amir Sahib, our most honored guests, brothers and sisters in Islam,

Assalaamu Alaikum Warahmatullahi wa barakaatu hu.

I feel most honored and humbled, to be called upon to shed light on the all-important subject of **“SOCIAL MEDIA, A CHALLENGE OF THE AGE”**. It is my prayer that by the end of this presentation, the true understanding of social media and the problems we are facing in our society would be clear in everybody’s mind.

In the Holy Qur’an Allah the Almighty speaking about the signs concerning the coming of the Messiah and the Mahdi says:

وَرَدَّ النَّفُوسَ دَرَجَاتٍ

“And when people are brought together” (SURATUT-TAKWIR CH.81 V 8)

The verse speaks of the world becoming a global village, and as I speak now everyone listening, will agree with me that through internet especially social media the world has become like a small compound house where we all have mutual friends, served by electronic media and information technology.

Universal networks like the Internet are connecting people all over the world. The information on faith, morals, principle and others are exchanged, deliberated and discussed in an environment that is not restricted to a specific geographical area, or limited by a particular religion or nation.

First of all, what is social media?

Social media is the web built services, which permits interacting and building social relations among people around the globe.

One of the naming spectacles of the present times, redesigning the globe as we know it, is the universal accessibility to the internet. The well-known of

the World Wide Web is social media, which comes in many shapes including social networking, photo-sharing platforms, social gaming and last but not the least chat apps.

Some prominent examples of social media are:

Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Skype to mention but a few.

Social media has been widely adopted in the twenty-first century, with strong enthusiasm among youth.

According to Global media research 2018, Out of 7.593 billion population of the whole world, 4.021 billion are internet users while 3.196 billion out of the total internet users are active social media users.

A range of positive and negative impacts of social media use have been noted by observers. The increased use of social media, or social network sites by youth across the world has several risks and consequences. But these risks and consequences cannot be seen by the youth of today.

According to UNICEF Ghana, More than 175,000 children go online for the first time every day – that is one child every half second ...Digital access exposes these children to a wealth of benefits and opportunities, but also to a host of risks and harms, including access to harmful content, sexual exploitation and abuse, cyberbullying, and misuse of their private information, the children's agency warned.

No doubt social media does have advantages, such as, research, news, awareness on some issues, also it helps to track down thieves or wicked people, Tabligh and many more.

The challenges of social media for this age are not limited. However, the negative impact can be felt in all walks of life,

These include:

INTERNET ADDICTION:

We all know doing the things which we love to do is a great thing. But when you cannot restrict yourself to watch and spend time on it, here, it's a trouble for you.

These things are happening among all ages of gender that they cannot live without mobile phones or social media platforms for few hours. They are so addicted to them to the extent that if you take people's phone from them for a minute, they would feel like being punished for years. This somehow creates worry and this habit is called 'Social Media Addiction'.

Social Media Addiction recently became viral. According to psychology and medical practitioners, it can reduce your concentration span and have a detrimental effect on mental or even physical health if used excessively.

Those who are addicted to social media are only wasting their time.

In the Holy Quran Allah the Almighty says:

وَمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَذَلْفُؤٌ

“And the worldly life is nothing but spot and a pastime”. (Ch. 6:33)

People are wasting too much time on the internet especially on social media platforms. According to statistics, an average person spends 2 hours a day on social media platforms, teenagers spend about 9 hours a day on the internet, nearly three quarters of 12 to 15-year-olds have a social media profile and spend an average of 19 hours a week online. We have some people who check their Facebook and other social media accounts at least ten minutes every hour. All their leisure times are devoted to social media.

The Holy Prophet (saw) is reported to have said:

يُعْمَتَانِ مَغْبُورٌ فِيهِمَا كَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ: الصِّحَّةُ وَالْفَرَاغُ

“There are two blessings which many people waste: health and free time”. (Sahih Bukhari Hadith 6412)

We have people who have more than 5 social media accounts. Social-media running is a big time waste. It is not an overnight administer, but a strategy that is composed of a series of daily time-consuming steps. Just consider how quickly hours go by when you read through Facebook posts. And that's just one social-media platform. So just imagine if you spend 20 or 30 minutes on each social media page, how much time will you waste in a day?

Students who were supposed to give more time to their books and achieve high excellence in academics are misusing all their time on social media

platforms. Some spent the whole day browsing and sleep very late at night and will not be able to wake up for Fajir prayers if they are Muslims. Even in class they will still be chatting with friends while the teacher is teaching. At the end of the day when they fail in their exams due to poor academic performance, they will begin to accuse others of their failure.

As an Ahmadi Muslim you don't have to waste your time on social media platforms and other unnecessary things. Allah the Almighty revealed to the promised messiah (as) that:

أَنْتَ الْقَيِّمُ الْمَسِيحُ الَّذِي لَا يُفْسَدُ وَرُتْبُهُ.

***“You are the revered Messiah whose time shall not be wasted”
(Tadhkirah Page 498).***

So as an Ahmadi Muslim you have to be very careful the way you use your time. How many times do we visit our social media platforms and how many times do we take the Holy Qur'an to read? We are always alert, ready to reply all social media messages and we don't care for the time that we will waste on them, and how often do we say our Salat with all the required demands of Salat without missing even one of them. Some of us even goes to the mosque with phones while browsing and never leave them home for the fear that they will not be able to reply some messages on time and will only put it in their pockets when the prayer begins, and as soon as the prayer is over they will take the phone and continue chatting, but it is very hard for us to read one book of The Promise Messiah^{as} in the whole year. Brethren we should be very careful, otherwise we will not be able to perform the rights of Allah and that of His creatures which are the two main fundamentals of religion.

According to the recent findings which suggest that social media use can actually influence users' personality and character. Recent research, shows that there is a link between social media use and self-admiration, and that the use of social networking websites may have an unfavorable influence on decision making and reduce the levels of compassion.

Because everyone wants to be the first person to report on what is going on, on their social media pages. It is very common now a days and very sad that, when someone is in trouble, instead of the people there helping him, they

will first snap a photo or video what is going on upload it on their social media pages before even calling the police or assisting the victim.

However, social media addiction, wasting of time and lack of compassion are not the only challenges the society is facing. There are many problems and risks associated with youth social media use.

We exist in the age in which countless describe good or “no big deal” what Allah and His messengers calls sinful. This is especially true in the area of sexuality, where the whole regions of our society not only accept but even sing the praises of sexual practices.

Sexting is one of the dangerous challenges the world is facing through social media.

Sexting is the sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, photographs, or video via cell phone, computer, or any digital devices.

In this 21st century, social media apps for chatting and messaging, are so common to the extent that the possibility that those having mobile phone will send or receive sexually explicit content has become a concern for parents, teachers, and religious bodies.

In the holy Quran Allah the Almighty says:

اقْلُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ ابْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ

Meaning: **“say to the believing men that they restrain their eyes and guard their private parts”** (ch 24:31)

Regarding this, our beloved khalifah said during his Friday sermon on 7th January 2017

“God Almighty first commanded faithful men because it is necessary for purity. If there is no purity then there is no God. Thus, before commanding women, men are commanded to refrain from all that which may incite their emotions. They are restricted from seeing women with open eyes, mixing with women, watching dirty films, and chatting with forbidden people through social media, all these makes it unchaste”

The Holy Qur’an addressing women about chastity said:

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ ابْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا

وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ ۖ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ ...

And say to the believing women that they restrain their eyes and guard their private parts, and that they disclose not their natural and artificial beauty except that which is apparent thereof, and that they draw their head-covering over their bosoms, and that they disclose their beauty not ... (ch.24:32)

In this verse, Allah the almighty admonishes all women that they should not disclose their natural and artificial beauty, and have been commanded to observe “pardah”.

It is very important for every woman to cover her face and wear proper dress to cover her whole body decently. But unfortunately in this day and age of “Look At Me,” which is enabled and encouraged by social media, our ladies don’t care about this command and circulate their pictures and videos on social media platforms without caring about what Allah and His messengers as well as the Khalifa of the time demands from us.

The fact is we do have problem with how our women of nowadays define popularity, their methods of striving for it, is the number of likes and comments they receive on social media platforms. If an Ahmadi lady knows that posting a picture of herself in an outfit that is embarrassing, disgracing and humiliating will garner lots of “likes” and plenty of fawning comments, the desire to do that is very strong.

The big disturbing questions are:

What is the philosophy behind people posting explicit images of themselves on social media? As a Muslim why should you post your picture without veil on Facebook? Why should you wear tight jeans and shirts to snap picture and post it on Instagram? Why do you video yourself whiles dancing with an improper dress and post it on your WhatsApp status?

Now let me speak to my brethren who are sitting here or listening to me. Why is our women drifting away from the teaching of Islam, and especially giving a deaf ear to the instructions giving to us by our beloved khalifah?

I will say it is lack of self-respect and disobedient, the lack of said self-esteem and bad behavior can shoot from various reasons, but these people wants to fill their lives with likes, comments and followers.

It's very hard for me to reason with them, I certainly can't understand why they sense the necessity to be the target of the sexual yarning of some perfect stranger somewhere in the world, and how this could possibly bring them happiness. This shameless behavior is extremely dangerous.

Do you actually think that by posting your picture without hijab will make you look more attractive? As a Muslim if you dance and video yourself and post it on your WhatsApp status, will that make you popular?

Our beloved Khalifah has many a times advised us that the women should not post their pictures on social media platforms. But we have given a deaf ear to this instructions and have exceeded all limits of posting pictures and videos which is morally wrong on these social media platforms.

Would you, as an employer, want someone who engages in these behaviors as part of your organization?

Those who are so shamelessly exposed on the Internet? Even if they are old pictures, can't the past, especially when it's so public, haunt you and taint your current reputation?

Giving guidance and directions regarding the use of social media at the Waaqifaate-Nau class held in Germany on 8th October 2011, Huzur (aba) said that there are many disadvantages of using Facebook, while the benefits are only a few. The creator of Facebook made it with the expressed intention of exposing everyone in front of the world. Raising awareness about the objective of Facebook, Huzur (aba) challenged Waaqifaate-Nau to ponder on whether it is in keeping with the status of an Ahmadi girl to want to be exposed bare in front of the world?

Stalking, identity theft, personal attacks, and misuse of information are some of the threats faced by the users of social media. Most of the time, we the users ourselves are to be blamed, as we end up sharing content that should not be in the public eye. This is to tell you that what you post says a lot about you. What you comment on defines who you are. It shows how gullible you are, if you post nude pictures, pictures without pardah and videos of yourself on social media platforms in order to gain attention.

Not only this, but social media exposes us to all types of pornographic movies which is one of the highest forms of immorality.

The 4th khalifah says in Revelation Rationality, Knowledge and Truth that:

“As far as human moral conduct is concerned, it seems to be universal in its sinfulness. Those who claim to be religious are unfortunately no less immoral than the irreligious. The so called believers in God are no longer clearly distinguishable from those who do not believe...”

Dear brother's lets always try to please Allah and follow the instruction given to us by our beloved Khalifah, because that will save us from destruction, and bring a lot of good to us. You have to make sure that you don't post your pictures or other information online. It is very sad that even in the washroom we are busy chatting with friends, when you are travelling you inform the whole world when you are leaving, where you are going and when you will return, when you give birth, the picture of the baby is posted on your timeline, do you know the dangers you are putting yourself? Stop selling your privacy for likes. Virtually, the world should not know every single thing going on in your life. Have some privacy

As a parent it is your responsibility to safeguard your child from the negative influence of social media platforms. You have to create awareness in the children that social media has both advantages and disadvantages. Create awareness in your children so that they will stay away from excessive use of social media.

All these are happening because parents want to show their love to their children by buying those smartphones and other gadgets for them at young age. Sometimes is very surprising to see less than 10 year old kid with a phone. You are not helping them but rather you are destroying them.

Our beloved imam has advised all parents that they should not buy phones for their kids unless they have reached the age of maturity. If you obey this guidelines of the khalifah you will always be blessed.

Social media brings about divorce, aids prostitution, supports fornication, encourages suicide assists cyberbullying, and urges drug abuse, disrespect, false information and many more.

'We need to stop thinking of smartphones as harmless,' said study author Jean Twenge, 'There's a tendency to say, 'Oh, teens are just communicating with their friends.' Monitoring kids' use of smartphones and social media is important, and so is setting reasonable limits, she said.

It has become more important than ever for parents to know the information their children are consuming on the internet especially on social media pages.

As a parent, have time for your children, always be there for them. If you are a parent and you are so busy to the extent that you don't have time for your own children, then they will always indulge in these immoral behavior, have a strong bond with them and coach them on the appropriate usage of the internet. Let the Holy Quran be your guide, and follow the guidance given to us by our beloved Khalifah, then we will be able to protect ourselves from the dangers of social media.

Peace be on those who follow guidance.