

16. ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATION IN DAVE EGGERS'S 'THE CIRCLE'

S.P.Sri Sakthi Samaya Sankari

(III-BA.English), (Author) Trinity College For Women, Namakkal.

ABSTRACT

This article on the analyses of Dave Eggers's "*THE CIRCLE*". Eggers's born on 12th March 1970. He's an author, publisher and literacy advocate. He's awarded '*Prix Medicis étranger*' and '*American Book Award*'. He's famous for his other work *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius* (2000). His work '*The Circle*' is considered as the master-piece. This novel follows Mae Holland, a young woman who lands a coveted job at the Circle, a powerful tech company that dominates the internet through its universal operating system, which integrates social media, banking and personal data. Initially, thrilled by the company's utopian promises of transparency and community, Mae quickly rises through the ranks. '*The Circle*' serves as a cautionary tale about the unchecked power of social media and human behaviour is controlled by digital platforms. It critiques the way digital communication reshapes human interaction, focusing on how technology-driven connectivity can also lead to surveillance, loss of authenticity and social isolation.

Keywords: *Social media, Technology, Surveillance, Corporate control and Digital communication.*

The Circle by Dave Eggers is a dystopian novel that explores the dangers of an all powerful tech company and the erosion of privacy in the digital age. This novel is a very big example of how literature upgrades itself according to the modern world. The story follows Mae Holland, a young woman who lands a coveted job at the Circle, a powerful tech company that dominates the internet through its universal operating system, which integrates social media, banking, and personal data. Initially thrilled by the company's utopian promises of transparency and community, Mae quickly rises through the ranks. However, as she becomes more deeply involved, she realizes that the Circle's obsession with total openness, surveillance, and control over information is dangerous.

As the company pushes forward with invasive technologies—like mandatory live streaming and real-time tracking of all individuals—Mae becomes a key advocate for these policies, even as they have more consequences for her friends, family, and society at large. The novel ends on a chilling note, raising questions about personal freedom, ethical responsibility, and the cost of technological advancement. *The Circle* serves as a critique of social media culture and its impact on privacy, freedom, and human relationships.

The novel draws clear parallels between the fictional Circle and real-world tech giants like Facebook, Google, and Twitter, highlighting how social media fosters surveillance, manipulates behavior, and blurs the line between public and private life.

The Circle's philosophy, "Secrets are lies, sharing is caring, privacy is theft," mirrors how social media platforms encourage oversharing and data collection. Mae becomes an advocate for total trans-

parency, much like how real-world social media pushes users to document their lives publicly, often at the expense of personal privacy. Mae constantly checks her messages and notifications, similar to how people obsess over likes, shares, and comments. The novel illustrates how social media creates a cycle of validation-seeking behavior, where self worth is tied to digital engagement.

The Circle monopolizes data and eliminates anonymity, much like how tech companies use algorithms to control what users see and influence opinions. The spread of misinformation, echo chambers, and digital manipulation in today's social media landscape reflects the novel's warning about centralized control over information.

Mae's personal relationships show as she prioritizes her digital life over real interactions. This reflects how excessive social media use can distance people from meaningful, in-person connections. The Circle introduces a system where every citizen must have an account to vote, essentially merging democracy with social media. This mirrors the growing influence of social media in real-world politics, where online engagement can shape public opinion and election outcomes. Overall, *The Circle* serves as a cautionary tale about the unchecked power of social media and tech companies, warning of a future where privacy is nonexistent and human behavior is controlled by digital platforms. *The Circle* critiques the way digital communication reshapes human interaction, focusing on how technology-driven communication, while increasing connectivity, can also lead to surveillance, loss of authenticity, and social isolation. The novel highlights both the benefits and dangers of a hyper-connected world, mirroring real-world trends in digital communication.

The Circle promotes the idea that "sharing is caring" and "privacy is theft," mirroring how digital communication tools, like social media and messaging apps, encourage constant sharing. Real-world parallels include the rise of data collection by companies like Meta (Facebook), Google, and TikTok, where personal information is used for advertising and surveillance. Mae is bombarded with "Zings" (instant messages, notifications, and social updates), reflecting the real-world culture of being constantly connected through WhatsApp, Slack, and email. The pressure to respond immediately mirrors how digital communication often demands constant availability, leading to anxiety and burnout. In the Circle's digital environment, interactions are performative—people curate their online presence to gain approval, similar to the way social media encourages individuals to present an idealized version of themselves. The novel questions whether digital communication fosters genuine relationships or merely a culture of superficial validation.

Mae's personal relationships suffer as she becomes more engrossed in digital interactions, highlighting how excessive reliance on digital communication can weaken real-world connections. This reflects real concerns about how constant texting, video calls, and social media interactions sometimes replace deep, in-person conversations. The Circle's monopoly over digital communication platforms echoes how tech giants like Google, Meta, and Amazon dominate internet infrastructure. The novel warns of a future where communication is fully controlled by a single corporation, limiting free speech and independent thought.

The novel's themes are increasingly relevant in an age of AI-driven digital communication, where companies monitor messages, recommend content, and even censor discussions. It raises the question: Are we truly in control of our digital conversations, or are they shaped by the algorithms and policies of tech giants?

REFERENCES

- [1] "The Circle: A Critique of the Modern Tech Landscape" by Kelsey K. Stein.
- [2] Zuboff, Shoshana. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*.
- [3] "The Dangers of 'Too Much Transparency' in the Digital Age" by Julianne Smith.
- [4] "A World Where Social Media is Everything: *The Circle* and the Influence of Digital Communication" by Jennifer L. Lopez.