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**th
ANNIVERSARY
SPECIAL**



SCAN THIS TO STAY
CONNECTED



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if I do not get on to social media, it will come and get me

My relationship with social media started when I was asked to leave Facebook by my teenage son. I was on the wrong side of fifty and a friend had invited me in the early years of the soon-to-be diva of social media. Not convinced about laying bare my life, I declined. Several invitations later from my age cohort, I relented. I felt young, connected, and with it. The bubble burst when I announced my initiation to my son. The look of horror on his face was enough to make me beat a hasty retreat.

Soon after, my friend, the well-known trendspotter Marian Salzman, encouraged me to join Twitter and helped me understand its potential and workings. Unlike my son, I kept my details 'locked' restricting access to me. It was a bit of a downer to realize that millions were not knocking at my Twitter account to gain access. And if I was afraid of access why was I on social media? I braced myself and took the plunge—I was tweeting day and night and following just about everybody my computer could scout. I became a Twitter junkie. I missed meals, lost sleep, and was reading a screen 24/7.

On Twitter I learnt to pare down my ambitions of having millions follow me. Twitter was a time guzzler and I had to get my life back so I learnt to use it judiciously.

And if that was not enough I tried my hand at LinkedIn. Friends cautioned that social media was meant to ferret out my private life and I would have hordes of undesirables chasing me and end up becoming a nuisance. I disregarded their advice and stayed.

Facebook for me changed when friends—all on the wrong side of fifty—were out there posting their grandchildren's birthday photos on Facebook and school friends from all over the globe found me. While it became age blind I also thought it was certainly bolstering globalization. I had two surprises in store for me; I was told by social media experts that a large proportion of 'friends' are local, and what I had not anticipated was it making the world truly democratic—that happened when my cook sent me a 'friend' request.

On Twitter I learnt to pare down my ambitions of having millions follow me. Twitter was a time guzzler and I had to get my life back so I learnt to use it judiciously. I made a wish list of people and organizations, newspapers, publications that I thought would give me insights into happenings around the world and help join the dots. In short, I built myself a 'news of the



world’ Twitter page that became my morning reading. It was a very powerful tool and helped me discover many hidden gems, like the Young Turks that was a channel picking up stories (missed by mainstream media) from social media, giving an insight into what was engaging the fast and the forward. I learnt to use it to speak out my views and be heard by people whose opinion matters to me.

Soon, it was pleasant to see almost everyone I know on LinkedIn despite their earlier protestations and concerns. Niche interests and somewhat obscure skills and credentials have become visible and purposeful. It has made housewives tutoring at home, volunteering or catering to local community visible and their skills available to the world. Retired people on their second careers are now engaged with the world, accessible and contributing their knowledge and wisdom. I think LinkedIn has done for dignity of labor what no policy or political manifest could have done.

Talking to people I realized that people have their favorites and understandably, prejudices and biases—the ambitious, the adventurous and

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the brazen are present on all three social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Those in suits and ties are likely to be found on LinkedIn. Newsmakers, opinion leaders, politicians and stars of every kind will be on Twitter and those that are shying away from it all will be missing tuning into the zeitgeist of our times—like bypassing entire social conversations like Downton Abbey, or Homeland, or Satyamev Jayte.

Social media is hailed by marketers and PR agencies as an interactive tool for customer engagement. But consumers are human; both under and over engagement is something companies do at their own peril. I do not want to know about every promotion, new products from Hailo, Colgate, Old Spice, Coca-Cola, Starbucks, V&A museum, Lux, Vodafone and on it goes. Let social media be a force unto itself and not a mainstream clone. Social media can borrow from the famous KitKat line—‘have a break.’ But all said and done, I know that if I do not get on to social media it will come and get me. ■