

Research Article

Reconceptualising News and Redefining its Values: Postmodern Perspective

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ABSTRACT

News media as a forum for public discourse not only tries to reflect and represent society out there but also signifies, constructs and constitutes society it. Discourses through news media influence the creation and modification of social identities. They not only construct social identities, but also contribute to processes of cultural change, in which social identities are rearticulated, reconstructed and redefined. Under the traditional mass media set-up journalists used to give emphasis on how they see the world rather than what they see in it; News media organizations stressed to maintain 'objectivity' in reporting news and made a clear demarcation between news and views. However, with the contemporary cultural shift, the audiences now want to have real experience and feeling about the events around them and therefore news needs to be reconceptualised and its measurement criteria need to be revisited. In this paper, some of the important developments have been briefly outlined that demonstrate the emergence of postmodern condition. Then discuss in detail the areas of confrontation between the traditional mass mediated conception of news based on liberal, modern, linear transmission based model and the emerging demassified conception based on people centred, participatory model.

Keywords: News, Postmodern, New Media, Citizen Journalism, Prosumers

INTRODUCTION

Our diverse social experiences and our historical and cultural positions exert a great influence on the way we are, the way we think and behave. The changes that we are witnessing in the contemporary society are drastic, dramatic as well as dynamic than ever before. Because of the changes that have taken place in the

society, it is imperative that our conception of news has also changed. The changing society expects that media professionals need to change their traditional conception of news and the yardstick to assess its value. The digital era, created by the logic of a modernist world, has done far more than simply empower young people with knowledge. It is the force accelerating an enormous cultural shift and leaving news organizations in a very fragile position. The contemporary cultural shift particularly among the youth can neither be denied nor ignored because we cannot escape responsibility for the consequences. The audiences now want to have real experience and feeling about the events around them and therefore news needs to be reconceptualised and presented in such a way that they can feel it. In the following sections, some of the important developments have been outlined that have taken place in recent years which influenced people in changing their attitudes, values and belief systems and increased their level of consciousness. Then a detailed discussion is done in the areas of confrontation between the traditional mass mediated conception of news based on liberal, modern, linear transmission based model and the emerging 'demassified' conception based on people centred, participatory model. First of all, some of the important developments have been outlined that testify the emergence of postmodern condition in our society. Some of the important developments have been cited in the following to assert the emergence of postmodern condition. The following list provided is not exhaustive, there were several other such developments that have taken place in our country such as the Delhi Gang Rape case on 16 December, 2012 which shaken the conscience of the entire nation on violence against women and forced us to rethink and change our attitude towards women.

COMMUNICATION REVOLUTION

The advent of new information and communication technology made drastic changes in the society and the world, and reshaped our personal, social, cultural, economic and political life. They are also influencing our perception of the world and changing our attitudes, values, and belief systems. As Marshal McLuhan pointed out that our 'understanding of oneself will come not through logic and knowledge but rather, through experience and exposure to various media' (McLuhan, 1964). And Jean-Francois Lyotard noted that 'new technologies make the information used in decision making and therefore the means of control, even more mobile and subject to reproduction' (Lyotard, 1989). The Internet is a communication and information source that, due to its features, has outshone the rest of the media, turning into a new intellectual technology, widely used by the population and by contemporary societies. Firstly, the Internet as a medium of communication influenced political discourse by providing new platforms to individuals and groups. Secondly, it has the potential to promote or undermine

the bonding of group members to one another, and the bridging of members of different groups. Thirdly, people started using the Internet to initiate and organize collective action, such as marches or demonstrations. Fourthly, it needs to be noted that the Internet platform not only available to the non-government organizations (NGOs), civil society movements and other social groups that want to promote their ideology but also to the governments and their supporters as well. Keeping in view of the powerful potential of the Internet, governments around the world are using various ways and means of control, such as censorship. Historically, established authorities tried to control and manipulate information and succeeded to a great extent because traditional mass media messages passed through the gatekeepers and controlling those few people were easier. However, with the advent of new media, the gate keeping role over information diminished to a great extent and in future it seems difficult if not impossible to impose restriction over information.

CIVIL SOCIETY MOVEMENT AGAINST CORRUPTION

Social movements against the establishment and its policies are not new to India. In fact, India has got the rich traditions of fighting against establishments. Most of these civil society movements are organized without availing funds either from the government or from any other funding from agencies. The leaders of these movements in general kept themselves away from power by not holding any public office and continued to maintain their credibility before the public. Because of this reason, social movements in our country are seen as powerful and independent forces. The anti-corruption movement that gained momentum during 2011 in the country because of huge trust deficit in the political class—was the culmination of several such localised movements that marked the birth of a new civil society in contemporary urban India. The genesis of the civil society movement against corruption goes back to 1990s. Some of the important reasons for wider public support and participation outlined here. Firstly, after economic liberalization various sectors of governance opened to non-state actors including NGOs and civil society organizations. The process helped civil society activists to understand and acquire knowledge on the deficiencies and malpractices in the governance mechanism. Secondly, the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 gave emphasis on decentralization and participatory governance further reaffirmed the involvement of civil society organizations in hitherto traditional domains of governance. Thirdly, India liberalised its economy with good governance discourse but in reality it never happened. Instead of increasing transparency and good governance, politicians and bureaucrats in the country misutilized their power to accumulate personal wealth. Fourthly, after economic slowdown a large number of educated youth either lost their jobs or remained jobless. These unemployed

youth came out the streets to ventilate their anger against establishment. Fifthly, the new communication technology provided a platform for discourse on corruption. Sixthly, some of the political leaders in the ruling party developed arrogant attitude after remaining in power for longer duration and detached themselves from the ground realities. Seventhly, the widespread use of Public Interest Litigations (PILs) and judicial activism further stimulated the momentum. And finally, the Right to Information (RTI) Act (2005), Public Disclosure Law (2005) and Community Participation Law (2005) are some of the important landmark legislations which have greatly influenced the growth of civil society movement in India.

The civil society movement against corruption spearheaded particularly by Indian youth was the outcome of inefficiency in governance, corruption in public life, and a general distrust of the political class, particularly elected representatives. The inefficient governance mechanism in providing essential services like water, electricity, roads, health and sanitation, bureaucratic red-tapism and corruption increased public unrest against the government. The movement raised political consciousness among the youth has serious implications on Indian politics. As Aruna Roy noted that ‘social movements relied on their belief in the involvement of ordinary people, to pressurise the system for delivery and accountability. It developed the politics of conscience, to temper the simplistic reduction of democracy to numbers’. Further she adds ‘post-Independence social movements, based on this tradition of grassroots work and struggle, have raised concerns of the weakest and most marginalised. Groups have worked tirelessly and unacknowledged for years on a host of important issues in multiple ways’ (Roy, 2012).

EMERGENCE OF AAM AADMI PARTY

One of the major political outcomes of the civil society movement against corruption is the formation of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) the leadership of Arvind Kejriwal in November 2012. Kejriwal formed this new political outfit after breaking away from his mentor Anna Hazare. This newly established political outfit within a short span of time captured the imagination of the people of New Delhi and became a formidable force to challenge the dominant political parties like Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Indian National Congress. The outcome of the electoral results came in favour of the AAP. Though, the party came second by securing 28 seats after BJP which secured 32 seats out of the total 70 assembly seats could able to form the government with the support of its formidable rival, the Congress Party. The rise of AAP to power signifies serious consequences for Indian politics and it seems that politics in India will not remain the same. People never expected this kind of change and an unexpected thing happened in Indian

politics. The success of AAP demonstrates a strong desire among the people for change. It challenges the dominant discourses of Indian politics based on caste, region and religion. It seems that a new kind of resurgence of mass awakening is about to come when protest and reform will become unavoidable. With the increase in the level of political consciousness among the people of the country and availability of new platforms for public discourse on public issues with the advent of new information and communication technology, it will not only help in accelerating the political reforms but also equip the youth to be more congenial and sensitive towards social issues.

JUDICIALACTIVISM

Judicial activism can be defined as the proactive role played by the courts for the promotion of social justice. This proactive role of the judiciary became widely popular after the Supreme Court of India entertained the first Public Interest Litigation. 'From 1979, the judiciary led by the Supreme Court in India became relevant to the nation in a manner not contemplated by the makers of the Constitution and became an active participant in the dispenser of social justice'. Some of the important reasons that compel a court or a judge to judicial activism as cited by Omdutt are enumerated as follows: i) Near Collapse of responsible government; .ii) Pressure on judiciary to step in aid; iii) Judicial enthusiasm to participate in social reform and change; iv) Legislative vacuum left open; v) The constitutional scheme; vi) Authority to make final declaration as to validity of a law; vii) Role of Judiciary as guardian of fundamental rights; viii) Public confidence in the judiciary, etc. (Omdutt, 2012).

The Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary are the most important organs of democracy. It is imperative that the failure on part of the legislative and executive in providing transparent and efficient governance in a democratic set up compels the judiciary to come out and play a proactive role ensuring justice. The judicial activism has touched almost every aspect of life in India. Now the poor, indignant and marginalised segments of the society realised that the doors of justice is open to them and nobody can take away their rights under the democratic set-up. At the same time social activism proliferated in the country and the social activists taking up the cases related to marginalised sections of the society to the courts to ensure their rights. Judicial activism, however, came into its own only in the last couple of years. In Dr. Zakir Hussain Memorial Lecture, Former Chief Justice of India A.M. Ahmadi said, "In recent years, as the incumbents of Parliament have become less representative of the will of the people, there has been a growing sense of public frustration with the democratic process. This is the reason why the (Supreme) Court had to expand its jurisdiction by, at times, issuing novel directions to the executive."

THE PASSAGE OF RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT

The passage of RTI Act is landmark legislation in the history of free India. It has given freedom to the people to have access to government information. In accordance with the provisions of this Act, the citizens, activists, journalists and non-governmental organizations enjoy a reasonable free access to all files and documents pertaining to the governmental operations, decisions, and performance. In other words, it means openness and transparency in the functioning of government. After the passage of the Act people from all walks of life in the country utilizing the various provisions of the Act and seeking information and records from the Central and State Government authorities, Panchayat Raj institutions, local bodies and even about the details of government grants. On the whole the RTI Act has given an opportunity to change the culture both within and outside the Government. On the whole it is yet another right bestowed upon an ordinary citizen to bring in the realization that in a true democracy, “the Government is finally answerable to the people not just for the broad policies and achievements and failures but for each action and process.”

The Act is a major landmark which empowered the people by forcing the government to ensure transparency in the implementation of policies and programmes that are undertaken for people’s welfare. As Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister of India, said in his address at the National Convention on RTI on October 15, 2006:

“We live in an age of information, in which the free flow of information and ideas determines the pace of development and well being of the people. The implementation of RTI Act is, therefore, an important milestone in our quest for building an enlightened and at the same time, a prosperous society. Therefore, the exercise of the RTI cannot be the privilege of only a few” (Goel, 2007).

The RTI is a powerful weapon that journalists can utilize to expose corruption and nepotism in governance. It is a means through which we can control unmitigated corrupt practices and ensure transparency and accountability. This landmark legislation is acting like an antidote on vested interests that try to conceal or misinterpret information or manipulate the media directly or indirectly to plant misinformation. Slowly but steadily this Act is influencing individuals, institutions and organizations to uphold accountability and transparency in public life.

UNDERSTANDING NEWS: POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVE

The term postmodernism has acquired special attention in the public discourse since 1960s. Zygmunt Bauman regards post modernity as ‘modernity conscious of its true nature’. In other words, it is a social and intellectual self-reflective mood within modernity. The difference between modernism and postmodernism

is therefore best seen as a difference in the mood or attitude, rather than a chronological difference, or a different set of aesthetic practices. As Lyotard asserted in his book *Postmodern Condition* 'the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the post industrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age'. Further according to him postmodernity stresses the demise of '*grandes histoires*' or 'grand narratives' and their replacement with '*petites histoires*' or little narratives in the wake of technologies which have transformed our notion of what constitutes knowledge. In other words, there is disillusionment with the ambitious 'total explanations of reality, such as those offered by science, or religion, or political programmes like communism. In short, postmodern's challenge the ability of a journalist to provide an adequate 'objective' account of reality. Under traditional mass media set-up, journalists are told to maintain objectivity in reporting their stories but from postmodern perspective maintaining objectivity is neither possible nor essential.

Jean Baudrillard (1994) further extended the discourse on postmodernism by focussing on the electronic media. He argues that whereas earlier cultures depended on either face-to-face symbolic communication or, later, print, contemporary culture is dominated by images from the electronic mass media. His conception of postmodernity is founded upon three principal ideas—simulation, implosion and hyperreality. According to him postmodern era of simulations is governed by information and signs and a new cybernetic technology. Simulation is where the image or the model becomes more real than the real. The demarcation between image or simulation and reality implodes, and along with this collapse, the very experience of the real world disappears. Simulation is the central concept in Baudrillard's conception of history, which has moved through three stages: (a) the 'counterfeit', the dominant structure of the classical period, from the renaissance to the industrial revolution, where signs reflected and then distorted reality; (b) 'production', the principal structure of the industrial age, where signs disguised the absence of a basic reality; (c) 'simulation', the reigning social model for the current era, where signs bear any relationship to reality.

It is believed that in the contemporary society the mass media wields enormous power. However, at the same time some critics lament that the media barons enjoy this power without responsibility. Some people consider media as a source of power—either in its own right or as the tool of dominant forces in society. However, Foucault offers a different perspective on the sources of power which might suggest ways in which the media might be constrained. He rejects 'truth' as an absolute because he does not believe in absolutes at all. According to him history is a series of fictions and what is interesting is not what happened so much as how people were brought to think what happened. If history is about the past

developments then journalism is about the present to be like that too for it is only the present for a fleeting moment as it strives to become history itself. From the Foucaultean perspective journalism is a series of fictions and what is important is not what happened but how it is presented by the journalists and understood by the audiences.

Many of the theories on media power are based on a model of hierarchical domination of the many by privileged groupings. For example Marxists believe that the dominant group in the society use mass media as tools for creating a false reality so as to disguise a reality of oppression and exploitation. Though Foucault does not appear to be challenging these effects, but offers another perspective on how power operates. He rejects the simple, hierarchical approach and suggests instead that power is not a unitary concept, not an absolute. Instead he says that “Power comes from below; that is, there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations, and serving as a general matrix - no such duality extending from the top down and reacting on more and more limited groups to the very depths of the social body. Instead, he sees power as being dispersed through the network of relationships which make up society and based in discourse. This is not to deny that power struggle might be unequal but to suggest that it is not exercised in a single, downward vector. For Foucault, a critical component of power is freedom since power can only be said to create an effect if the object of power has the ability to resist. Power is not simply repressive; it is also productive. Power subjects bodies not to render them passive, but to render them active. The forces of the body are trained and developed with a view to making them productive. The power of the body corresponds to the exercise of power over it. Hence, there is the possibility of a reversal of that power.

From Foucaultean perspective if history is a series of fictions then the present is a fiction too which further implies that power has implications for knowledge. If we claim to know the present, it can only be power that is causing us to apply the absolute of knowledge to a fictional present. According to Foucault “power produces knowledge” and he sees them as two sides of the same process. It suggests that in the power and knowledge discourse “truth” is always unstable. If this is so then the effect of power is not just unstable but, as a consequence, unpredictable and this idea has significance for any theory of dominant power through the mass media. Foucault takes another, broader view of the production of “truth” via power when he says: “Truth isn’t outside power... Truth is a thing of this world; it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint... And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truth; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true”

(Quoted in Stuart Hall & Bram Gieben (Editors), *Formations of Modernity* (Cambridge, 1992)). Michel Foucault, as Sheridan noted “is a slayer of dragons, a breaker of systems” (Sheridan, 1980). As he says there is no absolute truth. It can change as a result of the very discourse which uses it as a premise. His central thesis is that power is everywhere and can be expressed in a multitude of individual discourses. From Foucaultian perspective mass media can be seen as a site of power and resistance. The outcomes of power are not inevitable and can be resisted.

THE EMERGENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON JOURNALISM

The emergence of citizen journalism, particularly with the advent of social media poses new challenges before news media organizations. In pushing the boundaries of definitions of news whether implicitly or explicitly, social media is broadening the definitions of news from the perspectives both of those involved in producing news, and of those consuming and actively interpreting the news and information content. The citizen journalists in responding to the demands of their audiences are helping to facilitate a redefinition of news. That redefinition means focusing on information that is either essential or important to the daily lives of their communities of interest. The information and news contained within citizen journalism sites seems to play an important role in influencing the “every day” processes in which people are engaged—important public sphere activity. In expanding what can be legitimately classified as news, social media offers a challenge to mainstream media through the potential for a reassessment of traditional definitions of news. The unique approach to story-telling that social media sites creates a different set of expectations in relation to the types of news values used to judge what is newsworthy.

The advent of the new media has also changed the process of journalism. Firstly, news organizations could able to gather information not only from their own sources but also from other sources. Secondly, the web changed the traditional conception of deadlines. Under the new media set up when information is ready, it can be posted. Thirdly, journalism traditionally has been accused of being episodic—journalists used to report a story and forget it. They seldom used to give full context in a story. The new media technology has changed all that. Fourthly, under the traditional set up news was considered as a product. Under the influence of new media news is seen as conversation.

Changes in the News Story Subject

Traditionally, the dissemination of news is under the monopoly of the mass media. The people come to know about the developments that are taking place around

their surroundings by and large through the mass mediated channels. The story subjects that need to be given prominence used to be decided within the four walls of the editorial rooms. The sources of information mainly used to be government agencies, community leaders and business magnets, and public relations firms. The professional journalists mainly undertook the responsibility of information gathering and dissemination of news. However, with the advent of the Internet, the ordinary citizens got an avenue to disseminate news that they feel that is interesting or they feel necessary in the interest of the public. Thus the emergence of the citizen journalists posed a great challenge to the traditional mass media and forced to incorporate stories and subjects that previously neglected or under estimated.

With the availability of new platform, the subject of information dissemination is no longer the sole prerogative of professional journalists. Now anyone who has an Internet connectivity and drive to communicate news and information has got the chance to transmit them and become a journalist. The newly emerging technology savvy people are using mobile phones, cameras and other equipments to record events/developments at anytime, anywhere and then transfer it to the world through the Internet instantly. The traditional masses instead of passive and helpless consumers of news became the prosumers, i.e., they themselves produce as well as consume news. The emergence of citizen journalists has broken monopolies and privileges of traditional media in news dissemination and forced to change its news agenda. In recent years, the emergence of civil society movement in India forced news media to reconceptualise news from citizens' point of view. They not only ensure a fast, open and transparent in news reports, but imbibe humanistic dimension.

Need to Reconsider Story Developments

The traditional mass media used to cover stories that seem to be unusual or rare. The stories covered mostly event-centred rather than process oriented. The context behind the events rarely provided in those stories. This may be due to the fact that traditional journalism valorised objectivity which gives emphasis on facts rather than on interpretation. In order to meet the deadline as well as to face the stiff competition from competitors journalists usually presented stories that contained little more than 'who', 'what', 'when', 'where', and 'why'. As we know that it is impossible to know absolute or objective truth. According to postmodern thought, truth is a construct. Some adherents assert it is constructed by a community or culture. Others insist it is personally constructed. In either case, 'truth' is based on subjective judgments and propositions. In other words, a community—or an individual—creates or constructs what is true. Something is true because the community or the individual believes it to be true. This cultural shift has significant

ramifications for the news business. Postmodernism wants to play and experience, and it will not sit still for lecturing and passive participation—both of which are fundamental essentials of news. The journalist is a traditional authority figure. Postmodernists abhor authority, especially what they view as elitist, and the more we try to promote that, the more the postmodern world moves away. The more we try to educate, the farther away moves the audience. They do not wish to be taught; they wish to learn by participating.

Shift in the Sources of News

Traditionally, journalists used to depend on elite/official sources for covering news. As the importance of news story generally depends on the credibility of the sources and in this respect elite/official sources are considered more credible and trustworthy. So journalists apart from depending on celebrities for entertainment news, they usually cultivated good contacts with officials and elites for covering other kinds of news. However, with the changes that is taking place in the society, the importance of elite class diminishing and the credibility of the official sources decreasing to a greater extent. Instead of powerful, people believe more on the ordinary folks like them. The changes that have been taken place in political, economic, cultural and technological spheres in recent years increased the level of consciousness of the people and in turn influenced to change their attitude toward authorities and institutions. Therefore, it is highly essential for the journalists to reconsider their sources of news. They need to note that the credibility of information not necessarily assessed by reliance on official and elite sources.

Mass media has been considered as the purveyor of news and moulder of public opinion on crucial issues. The agenda of the news media generally equated with the agenda of the public. However, with the advent of new media technology, peoples' access to news not necessarily restricted to traditional mass media channels, now they are availing news and information from other sources and channels of communication, such as, social media. This led to the emergence of citizen journalists. They are covering news hitherto traditional news media neglected. In the process, now citizens set the agenda for traditional news media as well. With recent changes in socio-cultural as well as technological spheres the monopoly of mass media over news seems to be over. The gate keeping role of the mass media over news comes under constant public scrutiny.

Alternative Forms of News presentation

The traditional mass media based on linear format. Journalists usually used to present their news stories in a certain linear form—an inverted pyramid news story, a 30-second broadcast story, etc. However, with the advent of the Internet and the flexibility of the web, now journalists are forced to reconsider that. Because

of the flexibility of the web news can be presented in alternative forms. News can be presented in a non-linear form. The concept of non-linearity and the alternative modes of presentation of news are now getting wider acceptability even by the traditional news media organizations. Compared with traditional mass media such as newspapers, radio and television, a new generation of media relies on the Internet achieve a fundamental change in carrier performance and provide a broader transformation stage for the news media. For the general population could transmit information through text messages, blog, network chat in anytime, anywhere with any person, Therefore, from the view of the whole community, mode of transmission changes from the one-way traditional news media dominate to the sharing and interactive type in which professional media organizations and ordinary citizens participate, so that mass communication and interpersonal communication convergence more closely.

With technological development, Internet continues to enhance the functions of integration and the means and methods to receive news are also become more diverse. Multi-media approach is widely used in news and information dissemination. The audiences get a combination of means of listening, reading, writing, recording on the new terminal media, which gives them more freedom and more convenience. Noteworthy that with the means and methods of communication changing, the integration process of content of the news media has become increasingly difficult. Compared to new media, the traditional media has advantages on professional talents, experience and social credibility. So traditional media and new media should cooperate and complement each other, on the precise positioning of dissemination contents , on appropriate choice of the dissemination expression, on effective control and management of dissemination processes to achieve better communication effects.

With the increased cooperation among the media, the organizational structure and work processes of media have changed. The mode of management of mass media turned to joint operation of a variety of media, opposite to independent management as past. The new mode caused manpower, capital and equipment investment reduced and so was information production cost. The joint operation of different types of media has ability to protect the possession of the media market. For example, market of newspapers continued to be attacks by emergence of rivals such as TV and Internet media, so that the circulation and advertising sales declined, which shows separate operation of newspaper is difficult to cope with changes in the market. However, in media concentration and convergence groups, different media may integrate resources in information production and dissemination process to share resources, and complement each other to achieve joint cooperation.

CHANGING CONCEPT OF NEWS

News media audiences are segregating from mass audience to niche audiences. Segmentation of the audience becomes more and more diversified and so does the demand of audience. In order to meet the needs of different audiences, mass media must focus on the target audience and make accurate positioning. It requires news media and journalists not only have the common professional skills, but also have some specialized news literacy. Media should produce specialized programs targeted to different audience and transit information for different audiences needs. Mass media has stepped into the era of focus spread, which leads to the growing segments of media market, and emergence of professional media platforms. The boundary between different traditional mass media increasingly blurred and a large convergence of information and communication industry formed. Media convergence has brought a disruptive change to the entire media ecosystem. In order to adapt to this trend, various types of media organizations are carrying out strategic adjustments including human resources strategy, therefore news media has to face a lot of new challenges in future.

Traditionally, news has been the monopoly of the professional journalists. Under the traditional mass media set up journalists used to decide what is news on the basis of the so called news value factors. But the new media has changed that perception and refrain. More information is available on the Internet and the monopoly of the journalists over news has gone. Now the audiences have a say in what is news and what needs to be covered. Previously under the traditional mass media set up the audiences used to accept the news that were covered by journalists under compulsion as there were no alternative avenues available to them. They are not necessarily interested in what journalists provided something as news. Social media provides new interpretations of journalism which are fluid and continually negotiated between providers of news and their audiences. A key influence on the news and information content of social media is that it provides access and participation to those groups otherwise denied access to media. By the way social media facilitates participation in the public sphere for many of the people, groups and issues marginalised or ignored by mainstream media. In other words, the involvement of hitherto neglected audiences in the production of news empowers the hitherto neglected groups and individuals to define news in their own ways. An important outcome is the way in which social media content created by marginalised groups are legitimated within the communities in which they are produced. On the other hand, social media while performing the role of traditional news media by reporting events; it often delves into the issues behind those events, whereas mainstream news is much more event-oriented. The networked groups in social media are often providing an important focus on stories and themes otherwise

either uncovered or neglected by the mainstream news media. In challenging dominant interpretations of news, social media has enabled non-elite sources to have a say. The mainstream media is extremely sensationalist in coverage of issues like violence against women, human rights, etc. There is a dichotomy between sensationalism and ridiculous stories vilifying people on the streets and the focus is on individuals rather than societal issues. Most of what mainstream media does is too simplistic and social media gives us the opportunity to explain things in more detail. Social media lets you get more of the message across because you have more time and more control as well.

In this context, firstly, the new generation do not have the patience to wait for something. They want instant gratification and for them news must be available 24×7 at their own convenience not at the convenience of the news media organization. Secondly, the youth do not want to depend on the traditional newscast, instead they want stories to be available simultaneously, with the viewer able to select at random. Thirdly, due to the influence of globalization process and exposure, now audiences are ready to accept the absurdities and contradictions of life as parts of the reality of a multi-cultural, diverse world. Therefore, in the changing dynamics the news providers needs to redefine news. The aphorism in journalism “*when a dog bites a man, that is not news* but when a man bites a dog is news needs to be reframed as “when a man bites a dog that is news because that is unusual and the public interested in it and at the same time when a dog bites a man that is also news as well because the event/development is in the interest of the public”. News must include everybody’s perspective, identify the organization’s own perspective, or give none at all. The artificial journalistic hegemony known as objectivity is now questioned. Journalists need to give up their obsession with elite (prominent/ celebrity) sources. Now the people reject the authority and superiority of the journalists and they are in favour of participation and the knowledge acquired therein. In the changing social, economic, political, cultural, and technological dynamics news needs to be reconceptualised from postmodern perspective.

REDEFINING NEWS VALUES

For traditional mass media the determinants of news value are conflict, impact, relevance, proximity, prominence, timeliness, currency and the novelty. Among these news value factors conflict has been identified as the most important. Journalists are learning such values through exposure to them in the workplace or through training. While these values guide journalists’ selection of news, they also restrict the types of events and issues that become news. Because journalists follow the existing market driven news value measurement criteria that contain

those elements of drama, conflict, pathos, etc., which audiences expect. The process of selection and presentation of news story on the basis of traditional news value criteria can distort the world in the process by reflecting and endorsing an elitist and dominant perspective and neglecting alternative views. As McNair (1998) explains: “If news values can be viewed as an expression of social values, then the news values prevailing in liberal democratic societies refer to a world which is ethnocentric, elite-oriented and focused on ‘negative happenings’ (good news is no news).” While the values of sources are implicit in the information they provide for news workers, journalists’ claimed professional priorities of objectivity and detachment do not enable them to refute or invalidate these values (Ewart *et al.*, 2005).

Social media provides an antidote to both the dominance of mainstream news media by elites and institutions and the ‘good news is no news’ problem through its creation of a space and place which can be accessed by marginalised groups and in the creation and facilitation of an alternative public sphere. Alternative sets of news values are preferred by social media most probably because the people who work or volunteer have unique and multi-faceted ways of seeing the world and telling stories. In particular, their lack of exposure to—and training in—formal journalistic news values allows them to create and prioritise their own sets of guidelines more suited to the content. By using an alternate range of sources and by providing access to groups which are often unable to access mainstream news media, social media challenges both traditional news sourcing practices and traditional definitions of news values. In focusing on different kinds of news and emphasising news values different to those that of the traditional news media, the new emerging social media ensures access and participation to those groups otherwise denied access. Social media facilitates participation in the public sphere for many of the people, groups and issues marginalised or ignored by mainstream media. In challenging dominant interpretations of news, social media has enabled non-elite sources to have a say.

Traditionally, journalists used to use a common refrain “this is not news” for information that they think that does not fit to their measurement criteria. They themselves developed measurement criteria to ascertain whether a particular event, issue or development is newsworthy or not. They call them news value factors. They are timeliness, proximity, prominence, novelty, conflict, currency, impact and relativity. They are the key measures which determine the value of a story for traditional mass media. Over the years, journalists learned inculcated news sense through experience in the workplace or through training. On one hand, these objectively scrutinized measurement criteria guided journalists to choose news without subjectivity, on the other they also restricted them in covering stories

from human dimension. And in the process, journalists conditioned to present their stories that reflect and endorse an elitist and consumerist moral structure.

The emergence of civil society movement in India and elsewhere throughout the world forcing the traditional news media to rethink about their obsession towards celebrities and elite sources and instead open up their channels to ordinary people to express their grievances and put forward their point of view on different issues. In the long run the process will help in the creation and facilitation of true public sphere. The advent of new media along with it some of the drastic and dramatic developments in the social, economic, political and cultural spheres in recent years, the traditional news value factors becoming obsolete and in their place a new set of measurement criteria evolving. Alternative sets of news values are emerging because of penetration new media. Now ordinary people could be able to disseminate news in new emerging platforms and people are coming forward to tell their stories from humanistic perspective. Their lack of exposure and training in journalistic practices provides them an opportunity to innovate and develop their own methods of storytelling that is more suited to the content as well as context. The newly emerging social media provides a platform to the people who are hitherto unable to access mainstream news media and challenges both traditional news sourcing practices and definitions news. One of the news values that need to be prioritised by news media is that of sensitivity to local interests. At the same time, it needs to redefine the news values prevalent in mainstream media, in particular, that of conflict, and in challenging traditional definitions of journalism. In traditional forms of journalism the news value of conflict is typically preferred over other values. Public activism and citizen journalism have tried to address some of the problems associated with this by reinvigorating the media's democratic and public debate functions. However, few forms of journalism have been able to systematically challenge and redefine widely accepted notions of news values.

CONCLUSION

The world in which we are living never remained the same; it is continuously changing. However, in recent years we are witnessing overwhelming and unexpected changes in the political, economic, cultural, and technological landscapes. At the same time, the level of education of the people and their exposure to the outside world has also increased manifold. These developments, in turn, increased the level of consciousness among the people and changed their attitudes, values, and belief systems. The advent of new information and communication technology has also changed our outlook toward self as well as others. As Marshall McLuhan pointed out that our 'understanding of oneself will come not through logic and knowledge but rather, through experience and exposure to various media'.

Our society is seemed to shift itself from the industrial to post industrial and our culture from modern to postmodern. The prefix ‘post’ does not mean that we have entered a completely different world by discarding the old one. This means that we are living in a world in transition and changing our attitude towards seeing it and trying to experience it. Whereas the products (including media content) of industrial society catered to the needs of the masses; in the post-industrial society, the people no longer treated as masses. The process of demassification has already started. ‘Demassification is the process in which we are taking the mass media and breaking it down to fit specific individuals. For example, genres, fashions, styles, magazines, etc. Now the audience has control over the producers or creators of media content. Demassification is a part of audience autonomy, which means more freedom of choice for them. The audiences are active participants in the new media environment rather than passive observers’ (Sahu 2013a). As Baudrillard argued that the contemporary culture is dominated by images and in the present world the image or the model becomes more real than the real. The demarcation between image or simulation and reality implodes, and along with this collapse, the very experience of the real world disappears. Therefore, the contemporary media landscape has profuse with images. It is in this context news needs to be reconceptualised and its values need to be redefined in accordance with the changing dynamics of society and culture. The biting aphorism in journalism “*when a dog bites a man, that is not news* but when a man bites a dog is news needs to be reframed as “when a man bites a dog that is news because that is unusual and the public interested in it and at the same time when a dog bites a man that is also news as well because the event/development is in the interest of the public”. As Foucaultians argue that journalism is a series of fictions and what is important is not what happened but how it is presented by the journalists and understood by the audiences. The increment of Public activism and simultaneous emergence of new media with its citizen journalism avatar have tried to invigorate the media’s democratic and public debate functions. These developments are forcing journalists to redefine widely-accepted notions of news values commensurate with changing socio-cultural conditions.

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