

Whither New Media Technologies in India?

Dr. Chandra Shekhar Ghanta

Dept. of Mass Communication
Telangana University, Dichpally, Nizamabad, Pin No. 503 322.
Andhra Pradesh, India.

Abstract- Technology is playing a major role in disseminating the information. The ethical use of new technologies in journalistic work is imperative given the widespread use of such technology for the benefit of society. In general the usage of information technology can be found in the form of Internet-based technologies in information gathering and news writing. Attribution of online information, general use of online content, plagiarism of Web-based news, use of direct quotations found online. Unfortunately, it is found in recent past that such type of sources is being used without quoting proper sourcing and attribution. Even these unwanted practices have been encompassed to many areas including personal, proprietary, business or corporate information and what not?

Besides, the misrepresentation of identity using e-mail and instant messaging to obtain information, publication of confidential information without permission, use of the threat of publication of information online to pressure sources, and unauthorized use of online video, such as that found on YouTube, television channels too found as most unwanted and unethical practices in the domain. In this regard a million dollars question will emerge that whither these new media technologies? This paper examines the ethics of Indian newsgathering practices in the context of new media technologies. The methodology of the paper is descriptive and explorative in nature.

Index Terms- media ethics, online journalism, new media technologies, social media

I. INTRODUCTION

Journalism is a profession, which operates in the public area and therefore can give rise to various ethical issues. The Journalists Code of Ethics and other ethical guidelines are yet to be updated to reflect modern technology and the changes it has brought to the world of journalism. Journalism education in India does not generally offer college or university courses dedicated to journalism ethics; there is lack of ethics training in particular and the question of what constitutes ethical journalism practice is not one that is discussed often in Indian newsrooms. Most of the media scholars suggested that there is an urgent need for analysis of Indian media by ethicists and scholars to control the unwanted freedom of the media and violating the ethics.

In India, the concept of journalism codes of ethics has raised in 1976. The Indian Parliament introduced a code of ethics called Parliamentary Codes. Since the inception of the parliamentary codes, some non-government organizations and media outlets like Times of India formulated Codes of ethics for their journalists. Even in the regional media like Telugu, newspapers formulated code of ethics in 1995. Among the latter is the *Norms*

of Journalistic Conduct from the Press Council of India (PCI) and the *All-India Newspaper Editors' Conference: Code of Ethics*. The latter code, which is shorter, bears considerable resemblance to the former, the *Norms of Journalistic Conduct*. The Norms of Journalistic Conduct, which are adopted by the Press Council of India, focuses mostly on macro level issues or on specific areas of news coverage. For example, it discusses violence, indulging women, obscenity and vulgarity; privacy including not intruding (photographically) in moments of grief, and right of reply, right to privacy, as well as coverage of elections and communal disturbances, and references to caste, religion and community of people covered in the news. The code also cautions against sensational headlines, "suggestive guilt" (guilt by association), and glorification of social evils such as "sati" (widow suicide). Apart from this in most of the cases, the media restrains to disclose the information and maintains restraint in various issues like defaming the moral issues.

II. ETHICS SELF RESTRAIN

Ethics should set guidelines, rules, norms, codes and principles that will lead journalists and all other media workers to make moral decisions. They should not be forced to do so because ethics are voluntarily opted. There are teleological ethics and deontological ethics. While there is, a relationship between the ethical codes of journalism in a society of journalists subscribes to the role of journalists in that society, the Indian codes of ethics suggests appearing to play a very prominent role over other codes. As said above the code completely depends on the morality of the media organizations and working journalists. In other words, professional codes of ethics created by Press Council of India and other associations tend to address general social roles the news media should play in national leadership. It is most important to build confidence in the people on media. In relationship to government institutions/organizations and focus less than the numerous western codes that are concerned about both the social roles and specific behaviors of working journalists, such as paying sources for information or certain personal and professional relationships that are a considered conflict of interest and widely viewed to be unethical.

Naturally then, journalistic ethics are similarly indigenously fashioned in engaging the idea of ethical relativism. In the most of the cases, journalists are completely violating the ethics in the name of sensationalism. Journalists in Asia and the Middle East did not think a universal code was realistically implementable. It is due to distinguishable political systems and accompanying controls. Not only that, the belief of journalists in western code of journalistic ethics also made them to land on the wrong perceptions in this regard.

III. GLOBALIZATION AND MEDIA

In Indian journalism, the scholarly literature focuses on journalism and journalism ethics on macro level matters. The effect of globalization and the consequent marketing and profit making pressures on issues like independent journalism, conflict of interest, accuracy and accountability, corporatization of news and the consequent reduction of the public sphere. These are all issues of great consequence. The important are the journalists' encounters with situations that require ethical decision making in the day-to-day operational practice of journalism. Similarly, the codes of ethics in use in the Indian journalism the journalists do not directly address the practical day-to-day ethical issues journalists may confront in gathering of the news and news reporting. For example, the codes do not discuss the use of modern digitalization of media such as small, portable hidden cameras nor do they discuss attribution, impersonation, violating confidentiality, non-payment for content, plagiarism etc. These issues have become particularly important with the advent of new technology in media. Journalists confirm that the cheap and easy availability of cell phones, spy cameras, modems and computers had led to major changes in the way news is gathered and disseminated, and the kinds of news that is covered.

In electronic media the new technology has led to the use of bells and whistles, possibly sometimes at the cost of content. In most of the cases, the broadcasting media is creating hype. However, the more important question is about the ethics of newsgathering with these new technologies. There is a need to wide debate on this type of newsgathering formats and how the media ethics have been violated. While compact DVD (digital video Device) cameras, cell-phone cameras, spy cameras, miniaturized cameras with recording capabilities, and miniaturized microphones with taping mechanisms capture off-the-cuff footage and allow journalists to report news quickly and more accurately, they are also easily hidden "from potential subjects". Journalists in India have used hidden cameras to expose corruption and exploitation. Empirical studies of the day-to-day ethical issues journalists deal with in India seem to be few. Even fewer, it seems, address new issues related to digital tools, computers, and computer networks. One recent study on acceptability of certain practices among Indian journalists focused on five factors: Breaking Trust/ Masquerading, Accepting Gifts, Disclosing Harmful Facts, Staging/Altering photographs, and Paying/Inventing Sources. Indian journalists rated all these practices as unacceptable. The least acceptable practice was disclosing harmful facts.

IV. CHANGING SCENARIO OF INDIAN MEDIA

Indian media has decades of history in disseminating the information through various media tools. In January 1780, James Augustine Hicky started the first newspaper, a weekly, variously called as the 'Bengal Gazette' or 'the Calcutta General Adviser' or 'Hicky Gazette'. He is still regarded as the father of Indian Journalism. Since the inception of Bengal Gazette, the Indian press emerged day to day and became very strong in the public to disseminating the information. Today is over 200 year's old history. Indian Radio is about 100 years old and Doordarshan is about 50 years old.

Before Independence in India, Media was a mission. Its mission was to free India from the clutches of foreign rulers, the British. There were many restrictions on 'Media' in the form of regulations. The infamous gagging act was brought to suppress the vernacular press, for example, is one such regulation. After Independence to there have been many commissions but those were to streamline the working conditions of journalists; maintain ethical issues in publishing and broadcasting the news. When the media emerged as a main source of the motivation in the people, India had adopted a socialist approach to development, and also a development journalism approach to news. Within the media, in particular, the print press was private, while broadcast news media was owned by the government that especially was charged from presenting social issues. Journalists in general, irrespective of the medium, were socialized into prioritizing social issues news. Especially social issues are more glamour in the public and attracted a lot of attention.

V. FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT AND MEDIA

When the Globalization era started in India, the then Prime Minister Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao opened up India's economy and thus paved a way for multi-national corporations to enter in to our country in early 1990s. However, based on the 1955 law, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the Indian press industry was still restricted. This law was possibly aimed at staying the cultural imperialism. When the liberalization process came into force, the government allowed up to 26 percent equity in news and current affairs publications and up to 74 percent equity in non-news and non-current affairs publications. At the same time, the bill suggests that in any news media organization, three-fourths of the editorial staff and the chief editors should be Indians. This attempt at maintaining indigenous control of content did not keep the media from changing rather drastically. This change is manifested in the growth in a number of media outlets, in commercialization of the press and in its tabloidization. Circulation jumped 33 per cent between 2001 and 2005. Broadcast media had grown exponentially a lot in a scenario of both foreign and domestic channels. Foreign satellite channels became extremely popular within the urban, affluent Indian elite, but growth touched all spectrums of society all over the media.

The neo-globalization policies implemented in India since the early 1990s have also resulted in the commercialization of the press. The Indian media completely went into the clutches of the capitalists and it became a profit-oriented business. The "Murdochization" of the Indian press, as it has moved, from "by-line to bottom-line." In turn, Indian journalism is now characterized as what is now known as a "Page Three" culture. Generally, in the past, the third page would cover entertainment and high society news, but today this type of news dominates in the third page. In the recent days, the main concept of news organizations completely crossed all the lines. Instead of disseminating information, educate the people and entertain the people, the media is giving top priority to entertain the people only. The first two objectives of the media went to least in the list. The New media technology, which has likely facilitated the development of this growth, commercialization, and tabloidization, might also provide greater opportunity to engage in unethical practice. Thus, the study of the ethics of

newsgathering practices using new technology is a significant research topic for Indian journalism.

VI. TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA ETHICS

In the era of globalization when the new technologies are introduced, the media computer-based and network-centered technologies emerged and are being adopted by news organizations all around the world. Media organizations are completely dependent on the new technologies to gather and transmit the news. In the past three decades, numerous ethical concerns and issues about digital journalism and new technologies began to come to the forefront of journalism around the world. Among the early concerns to be debated and discussed, manipulation of images as digital photography and picture editing became increasingly common than before or after 90's. When these technologies spread in Europe, Asia, and elsewhere, the ethical questions in those regions also surfaced. At the same time, the media organizations were concerned about the speedy acquisition of the information, and decreasing the filtering of the information, the decline of fact checking, and even the re-distribution of the information without permission or rights. The potential invasion of personal privacy and publication of personal information concerns also grew in the public mind with the expansion of more and more publicly accessible databases around the world. While this issue varied according to regional and national laws, regulations, and rules, it remains a concern and has become a leading international issue with identity theft and other issues growing each year in all regions of the globe. Clearly, privacy issues in the digital era have also created a concern among the journalists and consumers of the news media.

Ownership and rights to digital content on the Web have led to numerous copyright laws and fair use of ethical issues involving new technologies and the news media. Use of published content without permission or appropriate attribution is relatively simple with new technologies and has grown as an international problem in recent years. For the past three decades, the growth of text archives of content in databases and on web pages, which are accessible through the Web, has posed numerous questions about the proper use of this content, not only within existing international and national laws, but also the inappropriate and unethical use of content which is most commonly known as 'plagiarism'. There is so much concern and focus on blogs and bloggers as either professional journalists or the so-called citizen journalists and the ethics of the blogosphere in general; social networking, online discussion space, and use of chat rooms as reporting resources or other journalistic applications.

VII. CONCLUSION

In Indian media, the concept of news has taken a new shape. In the early days, the media completely dedicated to educate the people through disseminating the information through their medium. The competition between the media organizations were

also in a healthy manner. When the liberalization process initiated in India, the complete media strategy has been changed. The credibility of the news has been completely downfallen. In the name of sensationalism the media, either directly or indirectly violating the ethics or entering the private life too. While the process of news gathering the media persons violating ethical values. The new media technologies are very much misused to misguide the people. Press council of India that is supposed to enforce values and ethics is said to be teeth less. It has to be rejuvenated. The owners of the Media will have to be oriented towards adoption of values and ethics. The Society being a composition of many individual ethnic groups belonging to various cultures, religions, various levels of economic status, in order to run the society in a right path and quality in life, everybody of the society should strive for restoring values and ethics in Society.

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AUTHORS

Dr. Chandra Shekhar Ghanta, M.A., M.C.J., Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Dept. of Mass Communication, Telangana Univerity, Dichpally, Nizamabad. Pin No. 503 322. Andhra Pradesh, India. Email id - ghantacs@gmail.com