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**AN ANALYSIS UPON THE CHANGEABLE  
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RELIGIOUS PERSONALITY IN CONTEMPORARY  
INDIA: FUTURE CHALLENGES**

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# An Analysis upon the Changeable Contribution of News Media via Religious Personality in Contemporary India: Future Challenges

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**Abstract – This study explores the concept of media ethics with special reference to the Indian news media. In India media ethics have been a convention associated with the traditional mass media. But with the development in technology and the advent of the internet the standard ethical practices are facing continuous challenge. This paper discusses three incidents where the traditional mass media - the press or television - deviated from the established ethical principles and journalistic norms normally practiced by the Indian news media. This paper will explore those aberrations and analyze the ethical principles of the news media that has been manipulated for a more worldly purpose. The paper draws conclusion on the future of media ethics in the context of Indian news media.**

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## INTRODUCTION

The news media are in emergency over the created world. Journalism as we probably am aware it is being portrayed, clearly with some misrepresentation, as 'caving in', 'breaking down', in 'emergency'. In this computerized age, there is despair in most created country, or 'full grown', media markets over the fate of newspapers furthermore broadcast television. Two decades after a call issued from a meeting in Windhoek, Namibia for the foundation of World Press Freedom Day, 'the entry of the advanced unrest – the development of the Internet, the rise of new types of media, and the ascent of online social systems – has reshaped the media scene and made "the press" of 2011 something that those accumulated in Windhoek in 1991 couldn't have envisioned'. There is a solid sense that 'the news business is no more in control of its own future' and that it is innovation companies like Google and the social media that lead the way and look set to hegemonize the public space that once had a place with the news media.

The worldwide budgetary emergency and financial stoppage of 2008-2009 sent a few western media associations into a spiral. Publicizing incomes, the life saver of the newspaper business, took a body blow amid this period. Numerous enormous newspapers, whose qualities had been sapped and whose situational points of interest had been undermined throughout the years, went into chapter 11 or security against liquidation. The New York Times was salvaged by a crisis advance of US \$250 million from Mexican extremely rich person Carlos Slim: 'to help the newspaper organization fund its organizations'. A huge

number of journalists lost their occupations in the United States, where newsrooms are 30 for each penny littler than in 2000, and crosswise over Europe.

There was an unmistakable sense in the Vienna assembling that an authentic time for the news media was arriving at an end and they had entered, regardless of the possibility that differentially over the world, a vague time of vulnerability. With the adjustments in crowd conduct and news utilization going with the movement to the web and to mobile stages gathering pace, the huge challenge for the customary news business is engagement of the group of onlookers that is escaping, with troubling budgetary ramifications.

Ethics is a branch of reasoning that includes proposals on good and bad lead. Media ethics is a point for discourse for almost a century. As the impact, effect and presence of media have ended up broad its ethical position and adherence to moral codes have ended up critical issues. Ralph. E Hanson<sup>1</sup> (2015) has expressed that media ethics is a perplexing theme since it manages a foundation that must do things that conventional individuals in common circumstances would not do. Media ethics manages the particular moral principles and good measures of all types of media including print, broadcast, film, theater, publicizing and the internet.

The ethics of journalism is one of the most well defined branches of media ethics and is often the most discussed one. The Society of Professional Journalists' code of ethics<sup>2</sup> has four main tenants: a) Seek truth and report it, b) Minimize harm, c) Act

independently and d) Be accountable and transparent. The subject of ethics in journalism has to deal with a variety of things like manipulation of content (by governments, corporates or by journalists themselves or their organizations), distinction between public interest and privacy of individuals or confidentiality (for guarding the rights of individuals or securing national interests), and conflict with the law of the land regarding protection of news sources.

In democratic countries like India although the freedom of the media is constitutionally enshrined and have precise legal definition and enforcement, the exercise of that freedom by individual journalists is subject to several clauses like the perspective of the media proprietor, the resources available for reporting any event or incident, the perspective of the readers or audience as well as the related reporter and thereby ethics of the concerned journalists. In modern democracies effective communication channels in the form of mass media are imperative for ensuring accountability of the elected representatives and transparent governance. Today the mass media is inevitable to the extent that if freedom of media disappears, so would most political accountability. But the question that exists in most situations is whether the constitutional freedom can be exercised in all its earnestness given the other hurdles confronting the journalists. Here the ethical concerns and values assume significance. The key principles of ethics in such situations is elucidated by Plaisance (2009)<sup>3</sup>, "Idealism - how strongly we feel about the pursuit of humanitarian goals and Relativism –the belief that the only way we can decide what's right and what's not is to rely on our own experiences and internal moral 'compass'".<sup>3</sup> But embedded in these principles are the assumptions that journalists would be objective, be committed to the truth, avoid sensationalism and operate without external pressures.

The traditional news disseminating media like the newspapers, radio and television faced with such a versatile and societal opponent is using innovative news disseminating techniques, depending on sensational even scandalous news items, racking up issues that were previously considered in bad taste for the news media or were outside the domain of public interest and therefore left untouched. There are a few advantages of a more assiduous and over-active press and television news media. It means that more issues now become the prerogative of the news media, issues which were left unscathed for all these years. It also means that perhaps with the widening of the ambit more people, more sections, more groups who were not represented earlier get reflected in the news items or stories dished out by the press and news channels. But the compulsion to out shine competition can weigh heavily on moral and ethical responsibilities. The study will discuss on the ethical standards of news journalism in the traditional mass media of India in the face of new market forces.

## CONTRIBUTION OF NEWS CHANNELS

As far back as the appearance of satellite television, there has been a multiplication of news channels. NDTV, Star News, Times Now, Headline News are a portion of the channels that convey a twenty four hour news service on the hour consistently seven days a week. It appears to be natural, then, to accept that the presentation of news would have some impact on the course of political and societal talk.

Schroder and Phillips discuss the parallel center that most studies on media and political power have i.e. is it the lawmakers who guide the media representation of social and political reality ,or whether the media force their own meanings of political occasions , on-screen characters and foundations on the public plan (2007). "The ramifications of this twofold center", they say, "is that whoever succeeds in overruling the definitional endeavors of the other - media or lawmakers will control public conclusion." They doubt then is, whether it is conceivable, that the subjects themselves, the littlest unit of vote based social orders, have no power of their own over the public plan, aside from the power to develop their own motivation of socially significant points by selecting from the motivation offered by the media. They assist question if the nationals do in any capacity have any power over the digressive encircling of social issues into public implications and values or do they just have a responsive, receptive part in connection to the menus and eating regimens set up by the media. Their study was directed in Danish society and is a model that could maybe be copied to some reach out in concentrating on the impact of news media (television or something else) in the Indian social connection.

How would we then analyze the impact that standard news media (for this situation television news channels) have in influencing the course for political and societal talk? Taking after Schroder and Phillips' model, we can maybe reason that as opposed to any immediate or immediate effect that media have in figuring out who the general population vote in favor of in a parliamentary decision for instance, the effect of media is in truth considerably more mind boggling. As their own study demonstrates it is a long way from clear what part media play with respect to the law based education and urban engagement of the citizenry. As per Schroder and Phillips, their perspective of medicalization proposes that media talks set limits for what is comprehended as "governmental issues" in the public eye, as the media speak to a central wellspring of information and experience. Yet, in the meantime, media talks are soaked by the routes in which residents discuss governmental issues, since journalists and media sources draw on talks that circle in the public arena (2007). This is a perspective certified in the work of Gamson et al (1992).

We are then perhaps led to conclude within the limits of research conducted that the influence of media is a

two way process. But even if the journalists and others draw on the discourse within society itself, the end product, with the emphasis on reducing everything to a two-minute sound bite and broadcasting only the most sensational part of a story, diminishes everything into a two-dimensional version of events that are in fact far more complex.

## RELIGIOUS PERSONALITY

Now, I would like to turn to the curious case of the religious channels. The question of the religious channels poses quite a few conceptual problems regarding notions of secularism and religion itself. It has emerged from several studies that the channels are proliferating and that they are also attracting a loyal following. There has been a steady growth in the number of viewers. According to studies by the TAM media research group, a 100% of the viewers of GOD TV belong in the 35+ age group and 46% of Aastha's were below 35; while 53% of QTV viewers were below the age of 35.

Many of the channels advertise themselves as lifestyle or spiritual channels. Aastha, the first in the genre, advertises itself as India's "number one spiritual cultural channel". Sanskar advertises itself as a cultural channel. However, there is no denying that these channels have a variety of programmes, all of which are of a religious nature ranging from sermons and lectures by various religious figures to question and answer shows where everything from problems of interpretation of scripture to questions related to daily life are addressed. Aastha for example has live telecasts of Bhagwat Katha readings, bhajans and discourses by such "experts" as Sadhvi Ritambhara, a figure who has long been associated with the right-wing Hindutva groups.

According to Indiantelelevision.com, GOD TV claims to "...offer a new breed of international Christian programming, including cutting-edge conferences, in depth interviews and youth and music shows, featuring prominent Christian leaders and artists from around the world." Quran TV or QTV catering to the Muslims among the populace claims to produce programmes based on the "Ahl e Sunnat Wal Jama'at school of thought in Islam". Channels such as Aastha, Sanskar, GOD TV, MiracleNet, Islamic Channel, Q TV and others form the daily viewing experience of many. As Pradip Ninan Thomas says, "The marketing of Paradise is big business today. God sells." (p x, 2008) Rajagopal's main concern was that a programme of an overtly religious nature was being broadcast on State sponsored television. On the surface of it, the problem seems clear enough in that if a State claims to be secular how does it then sponsor such public displays of religion. This once again poses the problem of how secularism is perceived by the Indian State. If secularism in the Indian context means that the State

is equidistant from all religious groups, then surely there is no problem posed. But in this post-Doordarshan era, this concern would then become irrelevant perhaps. In the era of globalization and privatization of television channels, it is not feasible or advisable for the State to gag private enterprise. The Cable Television Networks Act of 1995 makes it clear that no programmes that could create tensions between communities are to be broadcast. I would like to submit here that perhaps it would be difficult to determine just what such programming would entail unless the programmes themselves are explicit in their content which is rarely, if ever, the case. Even more problematic is I think that in any circumstance it would be difficult to assess just what factors trigger an outbreak of violence.

## VIOLATION OF ETHICAL PRINCIPLES BY THE INDIAN MEDIA

We realize that the particular elements of news composing are exactness, accuracy, unbiased attitude, objectivity and public responsibility. However these "groups of journalism" has gone under genuine dangers lately. The news associations and the columnists and broadcasters ignore and once in a while dismiss the "code of ethics" in the obtaining of newsworthy data and its resulting scattering to the public. This can be a result of an assortment of reasons like bringing out drama, expanding readership and viewership, weight from proprietors, compulsion from powerful and helpful news sources and particular dispersion and maintenance of news things by journalists themselves because of one or a few of the already expressed reasons.

Give us a chance to consider the primary case. Most journalistic code of ethics contains the standard of "restriction of mischief". This includes the withholding of specific subtle elements from news reports like the names of minor kids, wrongdoing casualties or data not significant to specific news reports, the arrival of which may damage somebody's notoriety or life or hinder the capacity of the organization. The Aarushi murder case that set off a media craze is an a valid example. An adolescent young lady named Aarushi Talwar was killed alongside a local worker of her home in a rich Delhi region in 2008. The twofold murder case went under extraordinary media examination with the way and sentence structure of the coverage setting off a civil argument on the points of confinement of the media. The media professed blame and honesty without appropriate verification by the concerned power.

Media's steady weight constrained the researching office (the CBI) to take the assistance of the Supreme Court which passed a controlling request banishing the media from any shameful or astounding providing details regarding the case. Equity Altamas Kabir



stated<sup>7</sup> "We are asking the press not to sensationalize something which influences notoriety." But rather the broadcast media and the press can't be singularly faulted. The news was available for use in the internet as well and the television channels and newspapers utilized the method of "remaking" of the wrongdoing scene and occurrence to complement buildup and enthusiasm of the gathering of people/perusers in the issue. The need to sensationalize the news rose up out of the need to stay significant and urgent in the public space. The moral standards and legitimate guidelines clarify refinement between "in public intrigue" and "enthusiasm to the public". While the primary respects the issues identifying with the advantage of the public, the second concerns issues which the public may discover fascinating. The news things which have a place with the second classification ought to be painstakingly picked and prudently exhibited so it doesn't meddle with the security of subjects or impede their notoriety. Mass media, being effortlessly accessible and exceptionally available, should be watchful and separate obviously amongst what and how much the overall population needs to know.

The issues that "interest the public" can become at times become grave threat to the security of individuals and nation. The deviation of the Indian media from established ethical standards is more prominent in the following example. I am talking about the media, especially television coverage during the 26/11 terror attacks in Mumbai in 2008. The coverage of 26/11 attacks by the television channels in India came under severe criticism for turning a blind eye to the safety of the hostages, the security of the rescuers and above all the national interest. While all the other attack points were freed from terrorists by the 28th morning, the Taj Hotel remained under the control of the terrorists. The television coverage helped the terrorists by showing everything in their live coverage from the vantage point of the rescuers to the possible strategies and measures to be adopted by the National Security Guards in the "Operation Black Tornado" without bothering about the impact it would have on the security concerns and delaying the rescue process. The sensationalism of live coverage of a rescue mission assisted a buoyant viewership which perhaps goaded the news channels to plan their telecast in the said manner. Neelamalar, Chitra and Darwin (2009)<sup>8</sup> concluded that the newspapers' coverage of the 26/11 terror attacks was more balanced and ethical than that of electronic media. But this can be attributed to the nature of the print medium which had time to verify and present the relevant facts and stories, unlike the television channels which had to rush with their reports and had to always concentrate on 'being the first in the race'. Neelamalar, Chitra and Darwin (2009)<sup>9</sup> stated that there was strong opposition to the way the electronic media sensationalized the attacks and a necessity to regulate media content during emergencies was felt. The Indian government chose to respect press freedom and abstained from regulatory measure but the News Broadcasters' Association (NBA) of India developed a

code to be adhered to in the time of emergencies. This instance clearly shows the media's flouting of ethical norms. The television channels can claim that the live feeds were available in the social networking sites and the internet but there is no doubt that the television was a more prominent presence and the pictures telecast by the TV cameras were uploaded by the social networking sites. The commercial viability of the transmission in terms of popularity and advertisement sponsorship muted ethical principles. It would be an interesting study to make a quantitative analysis of the advertisement revenues for the national channels at the time of the live telecast.

There have been repeated allegations against the media both press and television for conducting "sting" operations. Though sting operations provide startling revelations that benefit the society because of its exposure of truth, critics have questioned the ethical veracity of the use of the sting tactic for journalistic agenda. The sting operation can be used by the media to expose truths, espouse causes or realize societal agenda but it is attached with falsehood and bias and provides no scope to the victim to defend himself/herself under the circumstances. Such sting operations can unravel the truth but leaves a lot to desire when faced with questions on ethical propriety. The one-sided affair is a blot on the journalistic code of fairness and impartiality.

## TWO MEDIA WORLDS AND INDIA

Give us now a chance to swing to the distinctions in the circumstance of the news media over the world. These distinctions, which reflect the bigger examples of the world's uneven monetary and socio-political development, run wide and profound and can even seem sensational. To what extent this duality will persist involves guess. Give us a chance to call this circumstance 'The Two Media Worlds' and perceive how India figures against this scenery.

While every day print newspaper course has been in decrease internationally, by 17 for every penny somewhere around 2006 and 2010 in the United States, 11.8 for every penny in western Europe, and 10 for each penny in eastern and central Europe, it has risen 16 for every penny in the Asia-Pacific district and 4.5 for every penny in Latin America over the same time frame (Riess 2011). With almost three-fourths of the world's 100 top-offering day by day newspapers now distributed in Asia, India and China are viewed as 'the world supreme pioneers in the newspaper business' (WPT 2009: 6), with current day by day flows in the region of 110 million duplicates for every situation. In India, the development patterns available for use and readership are particularly solid in the Indian dialect segments of the press, drove by Hindi. However, the lightness and ramifications of this development need not be overstated, as it returns on the of great underpricing of spread costs and the dumping of a huge number of duplicates that go straight to the radhi market.

Next to each other, satellite television has been in light development mode in South Asia, in China, and in different parts of the creating scene. In 2011, television family units in India are evaluated to number 141 million, with 116 million of them served by cable and 26 million by direct-to-home television (TAM 2011).

And since the total number of households in India is estimated to be 231 million, there is considerable space for growth (Ibid.). From a low base, internet use and broadband access are growing rapidly, although unevenly, across the developing world. China's development in this area has been quite spectacular: it has upwards of 500 million internet users – by far the largest number for any country in the world – most of them served by broadband, minimally defined by western standards (Fu 2011). India, by contrast, has only something like 100 million internet users (Internet World Stats 2011), most of them poorly served by bandwidth. One would think the number would be much higher, given the country's fairly advanced capabilities in the software

field but this is typical of India's political economy paradox, large swathes of backwardness amidst high economic growth rates. The most revealing indicator in the comparison is the internet's penetration of the comparable populations:

China's 36.30 per cent, which is still only about half the developed country norm, contrasts sharply with India's 8.40 per cent (Ibid.). What this means is that the impact of the digital revolution on the print press and on broadcast television is considerably stronger and the tipping point is likely to arrive sooner in China than in India.

## **THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY CONCEPTION OF THE MEDIA**

Tried and true way of thinking in the west sets a free enterprise origination of a libertarian press with unbridled rights that no government and no outside organization could be permitted to touch. The social obligation origination emerged in response to this stance. In the United States, the main orderly hypothesis of a socially dependable press was exhibited in 1947 in the report of the Commission on Freedom of the Press, headed by Robert M. Hutchins. The Hutchins Commission set down five 'benchmarks of execution' for a free and dependable press. These were (1) to give a 'honest, extensive record of the day's occasions in a setting which gives them meaning'; (2) to serve as a 'gathering for the trading of remark and feedback'; (3) to offer a 'delegate photo of the constituent gatherings of society'; (4) to introduce and elucidate the 'objectives and estimations of society'; and (5) to give 'full access to the day's insight' (Lambeth 1986: 7).

The particular of 'principles of execution' needs modification and redesigning. However, there can be little uncertainty that over the long haul the origination of socially dependable news media has been powerful and has come to remain. Throughout the years, a generous international writing has showed up on formats for socially and morally responsible journalism furthermore on the constitutive 'components of journalism' (Kovach and Rosenstiel 2001). This has yielded codes of practice or expert ethics that have advantaged such principles as truth telling, opportunity and autonomy, reasonableness and equity, altruism, and working for the social or public great, and underlined such teaches as actuality checking, confirmation, examination, thorough information sourcing and investigation, giving connection and meaning, and looking after point of view.

The Indian circumstance shouts out for such a free, complete, hard investigate the culture, practices, and ethics of the news media and into inquiries of what sort of administrative and administration components should be set up. The item should be the same: to bolster honesty and flexibility of the media while empowering the most noteworthy moral models and best practices. For a really long time have India's news media got by on the quality of induction and creature spirits, their very own inchoate acknowledgment history, gathered qualities, abilities, shortcomings, indecencies, and undiscovered potential, and a methodology that is specially appointed and, on most issues, hit-or-miss. They have voyage a significant separation since Independence, with the pace quickening over the past quarter-century.

What they need to acquire in order to develop further is an active consciousness, a coherent theory of their own role in society, higher professional norms and standards and benchmarking, a better-informed socio-political and ethical side to their practice, a systematic critical monitoring of their own performance, a break with the illusion of self-sufficiency, an internal accountability to higher intellectual standards, a whole-hearted acceptance of social responsibility, a more precise and less breathless style, and a sober advocacy of their own role as an indispensable part of the striving for a democratic and just system.

Nobody knows what the long term holds for India's news media. But if they do not shy away from these challenges and go about these tasks earnestly and intelligently, their immediate and medium-term future can be considered secure and bright.

## **CONCLUSION**

Journalists have to act independently not only for the sake of maintaining ethical standards but for

zealously guarding their freedom and their constitutional rights. Journalists everywhere play a vital role in providing the public with knowledge and understanding. They must therefore remain sensitive to issues such as fairness, accountability and accuracy. Reporters continuously need to ask themselves ethical questions throughout different stages of their investigations and be ready to justify their decisions to editors, colleagues, and the public. Usually, the ethical way of accomplishing tasks is tougher, but all reporters should be willing to confront such a challenge if they want to protect the sanctity of their media. The Indian media has always held a high moral ground in the dissemination of news items.

The several advantages of the new media as discussed in one of the sections of this paper along with the advances in communication and information technology (ICT) gives it a thrust which the traditional media cannot hope to compete. The high standards of Indian journalism in the past and the acceptability and availability of the mass media at present would ensure the existence of ethical principles in the Indian news media.

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