

Media and Changing Society: Dilemmas & Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The term fake news is in itself is a provocative one but when we track down its origin the story goes a long time back when it was not termed as it is today. Before, the promotion of these various propagandas were not seen as anything illegal or against the right of free debate or authentic news. When the environment took a sudden change and the cloud of fake or paid news burst out in the masses, it was just a few years back and people started taking the flow of false news or other false propagandas seriously. The fake is categorised into two parts basically the misinformation and the disinformation, the first one is the sharing of a false news through the various modes of social media now days and the second is production or making a false news for the masses in order to achieve any particular agenda. The social media has made it quite easy these days to regulate any false news or to promote any false propaganda though the number of paid groups, websites and others. Moreover, we share the same fake news through our social media networks without even checking the credibility of the same even for once. The government these days are holding most of the big media houses in order to promote their governance, policies and future election campaigns. While there are very few independent media houses both offline & online that are fighting for the masses so that the original news and information can reach them.

However, the scenario of these fights against the governments worldwide has given rise to a new bloody war, which has led the killing of the number of news presenters and reporters around the globe, which is a threat to the right to genuine information.

Keywords: MV, PK, TV

Paid or Fake News

Paid News

Paid news or paid content are those articles in newspaper, magazines and the electronic media, which indicate favourable conditions for the institutions that has paid for it. The news is much like an advertisement bit without the ad tag. This kind of news has been considered a serious malpractice since it deceives the citizens, not letting them know that the news is, in fact an advertisement. Secondly, the payment modes usually violate tax laws and election spending laws. More seriously, it has raised electoral concerns because the media has a direct influences or voters.

Fake News

"Fake news" was not a term many people used two years ago, but it is now seen as one of the greatest threats to democracy, free debate and the Western order.

As well as being a favorite term of Donald Trump, it was also named 2017's word of the year, raising tensions between nations, and may lead to regulation of social media.

Yet, nobody can agree on what it is, the extent of the problem, and what to do about it.¹

¹ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/0/fake-news-exactly-has-really-had-influence/>

Paid News can be defined as "Any news or analysis appearing in any media (Print & Electronic) for a price in cash or kind as consideration".²

2017 will go down as another year that saw a steady decline of trust and confidence in mainstream media. This was a year when mainstream media gave tough competition to social media in originating and circulating fake news. *Alt News* brings you a roundup of the most telling instances where mainstream media was caught reporting fake news. In the race to be the first to break news, fact-check is the first victim. However, it is not always about haste. The year also saw the more sinister variety of agenda-driven fake stories circulated by mainstream media.

Here are the top few fake stories circulated by mainstream media in 2017.³

1. Republic TV: Jama Masjid in dark due to non-payment of electricity bills over four crores

The news on Republic TV about Jama Masjid being in dark due to non-payment of electricity bills will make it to any top ten list of fake news. This was fake news that originated from

² <http://presscouncil.nic.in/oldwebsite/councilreport.pdf>

³ <https://thewire.in/media/2017s-top-fake-news-stories-circulated-by-the-indian-media>

various Hindutva handles and Postcard News, a renowned fake news website.

Republic TV sent a fact-finding team to the site, which snooped around outside Imam Bukhari's residence counting cars and recording their make but did not ring the bell to verify if the story was true. It also did not occur to the team to ask those around whether the mosque is usually lit at night and what time the lights are normally switched off at night. Funnily, the reporter pointed out to a lit board at the gate but it did not occur to him how the board could be lit when the electricity was cut off. On the basis of this so-called investigation, ignoring the clarifications tweeted by BSES, Republic TV broke the news about BSES giving a jolt to Jama Masjid due to non-payment of over four crores. Alt News exposed the fake news in its article after which the channel quietly deleted its tweet and video without any apology or explanation.

2. Republic TV, CNN News 18: Arundhati Roy's statement

"70 lakh Indian soldiers cannot defeat Azadi gang in Kashmir" was the statement attributed to Arundhati Roy. A fake statement made in a non-existent interview during a trip that never took place was enough to launch prime time debates on Republic TV and CNN News 18 attacking Roy. The fake news had originated from some obscure Pakistani website called timesofislamabad.com and dutifully circulated by Postcard news and other known fake news websites. What followed was attack on Roy by BJP MP Paresh Rawal and prime time debates on the topic.

Arnav Goswami called Roy a "one book whiner wonder" and continued to rant about his favorite topic of Lutyens media and pseudo liberals: "they called the Indian Army names, they all came together, especially the Lutyens media, and the fake pseudo-liberal crowd, they came together to abuse our army, and then in rhythm and almost in a pre-planned way, one-book whiner wonders like Arundhati Roy came crawling out of the woodwork to once again attack the Indian Army." CNN News 18's Bhupendra Chaubey on the other hand wanted to know whether Rawal was right in asking Roy to "be tied as a human shield". Chaubey has subsequently deleted his tweet.

An investigation by *The Wire* revealed the truth behind the fake outrage fueled by the news channels and this piece by News laundry explored it further News laundry had republished an op-ed responding to Roy's fake quote and it apologized for its editorial oversight and retracted the piece. There was no retraction or apology from Republic TV or CNN News 18 for attacking Roy based on fake news.

3. CPM cyber warriors troll Australian cricketer Tom Moody after Moody's upgrades India's ratings

Mocking Kerala continues to be high on the agenda. Trolls in the state with the highest literacy confuse cricketer Moody with rating agency Moody's. Oh really *Times of India*? A careful look at the story and its source should have given you a hint about the chances of it being true but instead of doing that, Times of India carried the story on the front page of its Kochi edition. Meanwhile Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) supporters who had impersonated the comrades to comment on Tom Moody's Facebook post were now posting the link of *Times of India* article mocking CPM.

As the true story unfolded on social media, it was clearly *Times of India* that had become the laughing stock. The newspaper did not acknowledge its error despite the uproar on social media.

History of Fake News

It was mid-2016, and Buzz feed's media editor, Craig Silverman, noticed a funny stream of completely made-up stories that seemed to originate from one small Eastern European town.

"We ended up finding a small cluster of news websites all registered in the same town in Macedonia called Veles," Silverman recalls.

He and a colleague started to investigate, and shortly before the US election, they **identified at least 140 fake news websites, which were pulling in huge numbers on Facebook.**

The young people in Veles may or may not have had much interest in American politics, but because of the money to be made via Facebook advertising, they wanted their fiction to travel widely on social media. The US presidential election - and specifically Donald Trump - was (and of course still is) a very hot topic on social media.

And so the Macedonians and other purveyors of fakery wrote stories with headlines such as "Pope Francis Shocks World, Endorses Donald Trump for President" and "FBI Agent Suspected in Hillary Email Leaks Found Dead in Apparent Murder-Suicide".

They were false. Thus began the modern - and internet-friendly - life of the phrase "fake news".⁴

Nearly 70 percent of people are worried about fake news as a 'weapon,' survey says People are confused about the credibility of "news" and where it comes from, according to a global report.

Fifty-nine percent of people surveyed for the 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer said they were unsure what they see in the media is true and what is not, while nearly seven in 10 said they worry about fake news being used as "a weapon."

Almost two-thirds (63 percent) said the average person does not know how to tell good journalism from rumour or falsehoods. The report surveyed people in 28 countries.

"In a world where facts are under siege, credentialed sources are proving more important than ever," Stephen Kehoe, global chair of reputation at Edelman, said. "There are credibility problems for both platforms and sources. People's trust in them is collapsing."

The media in general — including news organizations as well as platforms such as Facebook and Google — is the least trusted institution, when compared to others including the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and business. Only those in China, Indonesia and India said they trust the media, with those in Singapore, the Netherlands and United Arab Emirates feeling neutral towards it. People

⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-42724320>

in the U.S., U.K, and 20 other countries did not trust the media.

Respondents had a broad definition of "the media." Eighty-nine percent included journalists; 40 percent included brands; 48 percent included social media platforms; and 25 percent considered search engines as being part of the media.

Almost two-thirds (65 percent) of those surveyed said they got their news from platforms, including social media sites and search engines, but trust in those platforms decreased in 21 of the 28 countries Edelman surveyed. Conversely, journalism was more trusted than platforms in 21 of the 28 countries surveyed. Only those in Brazil, Malaysia, Mexico and Turkey said they trusted platforms more than journalism.

The spread of fake news has been a big problem for Facebook, with Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg announcing changes to its news feed this month to help weed out unreliable sources. Edelman's survey was conducted in October and November 2017 before Facebook's update. The Trust Barometer also revealed that U.S. institutions have suffered a crisis in public trust, driven largely by a lack of faith in government.

The 2018 Edelman Trust Barometer offers an annual snapshot of a country's trust in its government, media, businesses and NGOs. It includes 28 countries and more than 1,000 people were surveyed online in each between October 28 and November 20, 2017.⁵

Present Scenario of Fake News in India

Through managed/paid news, viewers have been deceived so much that they naturally do not believe news these days. The most trusted medium media has lost his faith today. Round of changes to some extent has affected the democracy. Now the effect of money in elections has increased. It was thought to be the first in the West. On the outlines of West to woo voters, India has also started adopting the same technique and guidelines.

Regional newspapers were given very petite advertising during elections. Earlier there were very few candidates advertising in newspapers. Things changed and in the elections advertising also increased and transactions behind the scenes also increased. In recent decades, a huge difference can be seen that the candidates in processions pass are being broadcast and published in newspaper and television in accordance with their wishes.

Special committee are formed to monitor paid news reports, not just complaints of the black game, but after finding the truth, cases were filed. "Election Commission officials said 208 cases were registered, the highest in Andhra Pradesh. These notices were issued in 42 cases. There have been 89 cases of paid news in Rajasthan, out of which 37 cases have been issued notices. In Uttar Pradesh, 98 cases of paid news and notices were issued in 64 cases. In Punjab, 73 cases were detected and notices were issued in 41 cases."⁶

⁵ <https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/22/nearly-70-percent-of-people-are-worried-about-fake-news-as-a-weapon-survey-says.html>

⁶ . Samay Live,30 April,2014

Election commission does not take any action against the newspapers, which are publishing paid news. If any case of paid news comes out then the amount earned by paid news is invested in the election expenses of the candidate. Issue of paid news come in large numbers, despite having admitted that the Election Commission officials admit that they do not take action in such cases, but those cases are sent to other institutions- "Media publishing house or institution are outside the jurisdiction of the commission. We have cases of paid news and those cases are sent to PCI and News Broadcasting Standards Association.

The helplessness of the Election Commission has made media liberated. The present system is not punishing those who are using unethical measures in the democratic process, which is disturbing and distracting people. The comments of columnist Swapan Dasgupta and critic in this regard- "Media has no liability. Media is increasingly stepping towards offence and is working as insurrectionist."⁷

Paid news will soon be a crime, punishable by Press Council

The toothless Press Council of India (PCI) in 2013 have been sought to be given powers to punish newspapers and magazines publishing "paid news" with fine, stoppage of the government advertisements and cancellation of the erring publication's registration in the extreme cases.

The Information and Broadcasting Ministry had sent amendments in the Press and Registration of Books (PRB) Act to the Law Ministry for vetting before the draft Bill was to take to the Cabinet for approval to table in the winter session of Parliament 2013. Punishment will be commensurate to three levels of violations, a ministry official said. While the Election Commission has pressed for punishment to the candidates and political parties for funding "paid news," the Ministry felt the publications should also be held responsible for accepting money for publishing such news. The Bill will supplement the EC's recommendation to make publishing or abetting of publishing the "paid news" a poll offence with a prison term of up to two years.

The draft Bill seeks to empower the Press Council to determine violations and recommend action to be taken by the government. The first violation, as per the draft, will attract fine and stoppage of the government advertisements for 30 days, the second breach resulting in striking out the publication from such advertisements permanently and the third leading to cancellation of its registration.⁸

Social media Information

Misinformation and Disinformation

The information that is spread among the masses has always been the topic of larger dispute as to from where it arises and what's the reliable source for it. The information has been divided into two major categories that are misinformation and disinformation, which goes for the information being used for & by the news influencers. When a false information spreads in the masses for no reason of a trust ability and is circulated through all the others mediums, this is known as the concept of misinformation. In addition, when an information produced for the sole purpose

⁷ <https://nayaindia.com/delhi>

⁸ <http://www.freepressjournal.in> by FJP Bureau

of it used and circulated to influence people in a desired way is known disinformation.

According to Mark Twain, "A lie can travel half way around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes." Thing is not even confirmed if mark twain really quoted the above and will never were known as the best thing so far. The production and the postproduction of an information has gone this far that quote we consider to be influential are loose on their writer's name. The information that is produced with an intent to prove a point even beyond the level of authenticity, which covers the circulation, production and the actual resonance. To prove themselves right the authorities can go to any level of manipulating the people and this is what has given rise to these two concepts of misinformation and disinformation.

Influence of Social Media

The 21st has seen the biggest influence on a very large population in a very short span of time and that is just because of the presence of the social media. The popularity of the falsehood among the people and the spreading of the false news like a wildfire has never been so easy without the support of the technology. In order to understand as to how the things works it is important to know that who are behind all these influential campaigns. The social media is totally based upon the algorithms; they just calculate your social media behaviour and expose you to such similar posts for the next round and counting. The fake news bounce backs while hitting the other such news and which are the result of the user's methodology about a particular type. Moreover, the fake news grows exponentially because you share it, because either it validates your beliefs, or you do not know it's fake. In the last year, more than 1.7 million people shared itself over the top of the potent news circulating as fake news. The fake accounts are majorly responsible for the spreading and making it a hot topic as a fake news, which is a paid propaganda of some corporation and government sometimes. Fake news even is filtered but still takes approximately 13 hours to be taken down and that is a lot of time for a fake news to spread like a fire among the vast population. In addition, the traditional media perpetrates an "elite consensus" that questions some assumptions more than the others do. The sole purpose remains to sow confusion that obscures basic facts, thereby impending necessary debate among the masses as said by Ali Velshi during his speech at Tedx.

The technology has gone too far on the production of fake news as new software's are coming up in the markets for the corporate or official used in a wrongful manner.

Manipulated pictures of the high dignitaries were earlier used in order to spread a wrongful propaganda or in order to defame him.

The software used those days was the Adobe Photoshop, which can in no time place two persons present at the same place even though they are not. However, the technology has taken the production of the fake news to a completely new next level. According to the sterling university, the facial re-enactment of a person will soon be possible in such a way that other person against his will can manipulate even a single expression without even detected. Professor Eddy Borges Ray said that it would be possible with the help of technology that we can even change the entire speech of a

person and can circulate it according to our needs in real time.

Thanks to another software Adobe voice that just reciprocates and the produce, the exact speech from any person's mouth as typed under by the user with complete facial expressions manipulations.

Contribution of Government

The governments are the biggest contributors to the concept of fake and paid news as far as they in order to promote their personal agendas and to promote/regulate their disfigured propagandas among the population somehow started the concept. The government shall be held liable for messing things up for the general population that it has become excessively difficult to find a difference between what is real and what is not.

The fake news are spread for primarily three purposes such as:

- To rise to power,
- To retain power, and
- To snatch power.

The governments from the earlier times are manipulating the common people for their own good and then it was known as the false hood promoted through the radio channels as it being the most efficient and reliable source when it comes to India. They were in complete control over these mediums for reaching the large number of people and the presenters are paid well in order to keep things aligned. The governments at the international level also give rise to such problems or issue just for the sake of fulfilling their own benefits. The United Kingdom's government falsely upheld the wars in Iraq and Iran by sending in the armies at record numbers but later it was found out that these countries were never at war. The purpose served by such proxy wars is to facilitate the business of the big corporate houses linked with these governments. In addition, the oil wells have become the ultimate reason for the never-ending wars at the Arab region, which sources the endless number of false news or fake news.

Similarly, India being a democratic country and the government considered accountable for its actions, the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) ruling in central as well as major part of the country has been spending over \$155,000 US per day in the form of full-page advertisements in the newspaper and advertorials on TV and radio channels. This account by a RTI filed under the expenditure of the ruling party and when the numbers came in they left no point to surprise the people. Moreover, during the time of tension at west Bengal where Trinmul Congress (TMC) was ruling tension arised and the BJP officials left no point to fuel it up through their paid news, even some doctored photos all across the media and other social media were spread.

The fake news grows exponentially because you share it, because either it validates your beliefs, or you do not know its face. In addition, the fake news purveyors are counting on your object and laziness. The BJP IT cell that has been formed for the for just purpose of production and spreading of the fake news though its countless number of pages, followers, fake accounts, groups and many more. The government has the complete hold over as to what and when will be telecasted and be seen by the common people in

order to manipulate them completely. In a country of belief, you just have to make them believe in something that is good for them and they will follow you blindfolded. Such activities are the reason behind the still growing communal tensions among the various communities in the country of such a vast culture & heritage. The concept of falsehood if presented in a proper way does not look 1% of fake to the common people and they believe in them, which is the reason behind the government escapes under the hood with cautions.

The World of Journalism

The only agency that makes the government of the countries accountable for their sins is the media or the journalists through their channels such as television, newspaper and others. While some consider journalism a pure business for those who take it seriously for the development of the nation though this is the medium for the common people to know that what is happening where at what time. The journalism holds the complete power to account for the deeds of the government to the common people and the government cannot control them in any way. However, whether it was America's election or India's election the political parties have controlled the media in the last possible way. While few journalists have revolted against the ruling governments about their illicit activities and they have faced dire consequences leading to even deaths in some countries like Indonesia, Nigeria. Few new houses such as BBC, Al Jazeera, Zee TV, Quint and The Wire are playing the role of a responsible journalism and they are exposing the world to the deeds of the governments around the world.

Conclusion

The whole story of fake/paid media revolves around this fact that the common man is targeted to manipulations as is prone to such things without much of revolt. Let us not move into a world in which we not only fail to speak truth to power, but in which we are not even able to discover the truth. We as the people of democratic needs to a little aware of the fact that not everything that is shown to us or that comes in front of us is a complete truth and we should check its credibility through all the ways possible. We in a second share a news over the social media without knowing its

credibility and it spreading like a wildfire. The common people need to raise voice and should check upon the government so that it does not make fool of them.

Adolf Hitler once said that, "How lucky that country's government would be whose population will lack the capability to think and understand properly."

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