

Need, Scope and Hindrances of Media Information Literacy in India

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Abstract- Media has become an integral part of human life in India and abroad. Most of our routine life is dictated by Media only. Television has long been the 'most talkative member of our families.' The advent of Satellite Television Channels in early 90s and demassification in mid 90s enabled people to watch TV channel of their choice. Specific channels came up for specific audience. While Frequency Modulation Radio Stations kept on enthraling the audience with a variety of music based programmes, there came Community Radio Stations which aim at developing the local talent apart from catering to the needs of local people. The turn of the century witnessed the arrival of Digital Media which changed the very definition of communication and Mass Communication. This media thrives on user generated content which is unlimited and uncensored. This Internet driven media provides abundance of knowledge and information for information seekers and plenty of entertainment for entertainment seekers. E-newspapers, Radio services, Television channels, Audio-visual music, and Fantasy Gaming and now OTT platforms are available on Digital Media. Digital Media has brought about far reaching changes in the life and living style patterns of society. That's why the spread of Media Information Literacy is quite relevant and necessary in India as most of the people using this media are not technical savvy and they know little about the repercussions of the content they upload and share on digital platforms.

Key- Words: Digital Media Literacy, Demassification, Digital Media, Technical Savvy, Patterns of society.

INTRODUCTION:

Digital Media has taken the world in its stride. There are about 5 billion Internet users in The World. Most of them make use of Digital Media. India is no exception. The average screen time in India is much higher in India as compared to other parts of the world. Young Generation is regarded as the 'Heavy Users' of Digital Media. Social Media has changed the ways and modes of interpersonal communication. There are applications which are specially meant for chatting with friends, colleagues or family members. One may exchange his opinion, views and emotions etc. in textual, pictorial, audio as well as audio-visual forms. WhatsApp, Share Chat, Facebook Messenger, Skype, Kick, WeChat, GeoChat, Telegram etc. are quite popular among users. It is round the clock media. It can be safely said, 'Digital Media never sleeps.' Then there are Social Media sites which provide the users adequate platforms to express their opinion in all possible formats. Facebook and Instagram are frontrunners in this list. Then there is You Tube which has given birth to Citizen Journalism. Looking at all that Digital Media offers to its users, it becomes imperative to have Media Literacy as to how and when to make use of the information available on this media.

Media literacy is basically the developing of critical thinking to enable users to distinguish between information and disinformation. Digital Media is replete with huge garbage of disinformation and fake news. People must know how to cross check any information that comes their way. Thus, Media Literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, & produce communication in a variety of forms. In fact Media Literacy encompasses entire Mass Media as there is no dearth of propaganda and disinformation on certain TV News Channels also. Media Information Literacy enables us to 'think critically and act wisely.'

“AAEC: access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate “
(Aufderheide, 1993)

In modern times media has become an integral part of our lives. Media sets the agenda of our daily routine and cultivates a lot of habits in us. Heavy viewers can be easy targets while light viewers may take time to get impressed. But it is a harsh reality that Mass Media is Omni-potent and it succeeds in impressing people sooner than later. It's important to be able to understand and analyze the information we're receiving. This is where media literacy comes in. To understand the term media literacy, it is necessary to highlight both the words: Media is a kind of information medium which provides information to the public. Literacy means educating and making the public aware of the media. Due to which the public is made aware of the news.

One of the first steps in becoming media literate is to understand the different types of media. Traditional industrial media includes newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio. New media includes social media platforms, blogs, and podcasts. Each type of media has different characteristics and can have a different impact on the audiences. Print media, electronic media, digital media and the use of digital media increasing day by day. Let us have a look at the merits of each Mass Media:

PRINT MEDIA:

Print Media was the first one to reach out to the people. As it is in printed form so it was meant only for the literates. In those times literacy was quite low all over the world. It was rather low in India. It was in 1780 that the first Indian news papers 'Bengal Gazette' was published by James Augustus Hickey from Calcutta. Those were the days when the Indians were fighting against the British tyranny and the struggle for freedom was going on. In those times raja ram Mohan Roy, Mahatama Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat rai etc. Started newspapers which were meant to infuse the spirit of nationalism among people. There were certain

English newspapers also like The Times of India, The Statesman, The Hindu and The Tribune. But low literacy rate never let Print Media to take a kick start in India. The way social media dominates in the present times, in the same way print media had special importance at that time. News has been presented with pictures in the newspapers. People still believe in the printed word more than audio-visual or Digital Media.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA:

Electronic Media includes Television and Radio. As radio can be heard by anyone so it was an instant hit. A variety of radio formats provided people with wholesome entertainment and authentic news. Such was the influence of Radio among public that the credit of Green revolution is given to Radio. It was radio that helped decisively to change the traditional thinking patterns of people and make them accept the new ways and modes of agriculture. Mechanization of agriculture is also credited to Radio. While Vividh Bharti and later on FM broadcast kept entertaining the masses, All India Radio broadcasted and it is still broadcasting development oriented programmes. It is the media that the general public uses to access news and information in the society using electronic technology. It provides information to the audience through visuals. Television came with its audio-visual appeal. Though its transmission started in 1959 yet it was only after SITE experiment in 1975-76 that the real value of this medium was realised. Doordarshan became popular after the live broadcast of IX Asian Games which were held in New Delhi in 1982. 1983 witnessed the start of tele-serials on Doordarshan. 'Hum Log', 'Buniyad', 'Bharat Ek Khoj' and 'Tamas' were instant hits. But the popularity of Ramayan and Mahabharata stands heads and shoulders above others. There used to be curfew like situations in urban pockets as well as rural areas at the time of the telecast of these serials. Chitrahar and Rangoli were the two music based programmes liked by one and all. Television Telecast took a decisive turn with the arrival of Satellite Television Channels which are quite popular among audience even today.

DIGITAL MEDIA:

21st century paved the way for the arrival of an entirely new media which came to be called Digital Media. Digital Media and Internet supported Social Media became instant hits with the youth in particular. It may be debatable issue whether and to what extent the youth or other people are able to make the most of Digital and Social Media but there is hardly any doubt that this media has become indispensable part of people all around the world. Through digital media a vast variety of information on every subject is available to the users. Virtually every sort of information is just a click away from users. But it needs to be handled with ultra care. There is abundance of disinformation in the guise of information and fake news disguised in the wrapper of news. There are fake photographs, audio clips and audio-visual content. Even social media is not that easy. All these applications take your personal data which may be used for any nefarious purpose. It is true that Digital Media has opened the flood gated of information for its users but it is equally true that there is a huge garbage of disinformation. Hence, Digital Literacy and cautious approach is the key to shelter oneself from disinformation, fake news and fake people.

MIL (Media information literacy):

MIL, or Media and Information Literacy, refers to the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and create media and information in various forms. With the rapid pace of digital innovation and the proliferation of fake news and misinformation, MIL has become an essential skill for individuals and societies worldwide.

Media and information literacy play an important role in today's society. In the same way that digital things have made ordinary people their own, the place of media and information literacy has also become important. Media and information literacy play an important role in preventing the spread of misinformation in society on a daily basis. In the same way that the media has an important role in society, the media information and literacy also has its own important place in providing information to individuals of every class, which information is beneficial to them and which information isn't beneficial for them. In the future, media information and literacy information should be people of all classes whether they are students of school, college students, students of university and people connected with other organizations in the future the information of media and literature will prove very beneficial to society. MIL is a step towards creating a transparent and responsible society that can make informed decisions based on accurate and reliable information. As the world becomes increasingly digital, MIL skills have become essential. Individuals need to be able to differentiate between credible and fake news, understand the consequences of spreading misinformation, and comprehend the impact of media on their personal and professional lives. In today's world, digital literacy skills are not optional, but essential to succeed.

Need of MIL in India:

In recent years, the proliferation of fake news, propaganda, and misinformation has emerged as a major challenge for the media landscape worldwide. India, with its vast population and diverse demographics, is particularly vulnerable to malicious propaganda and disinformation campaigns that can potentially lead to social unrest and violence. Therefore, there is a dire need for promoting media information literacy in the country to empower citizens with the skills and knowledge required to critically evaluate and verify information from various sources.

There were times when people would turn to Newspapers for getting authentic news or any other information printed and published in it. Those were the times when media was a mission and it was not yet commercialised. But now the Newspapers are owned by politicians or big media houses who dare not publish any news item that goes against their political affiliation or business interests. For example BJP or Congress supported newspaper will never publish any news story that is not in consonance with its political philosophy. People find themselves at crossroads where they are unable to decide which newspaper they should read and which not. The same stands true about Satellite Television News Channels. There are also owned by either people belonging to certain big political parties or big businessmen. They don't ever broadcast any news that may prove harmful for their political party or which

is not in consonance with its political philosophy. Business interests, of course, reign supreme. Radio being a public broadcaster has to toe the line of the party in power. Chanda Committee in its report in 1966 observed, "Radio dances to the whims and fancies of whosoever is the Prime Minister." This stands true even after almost 60 years of the submission of report by Chanda Committee. Digital Media is unbridled and uncensored. It thrives on user-generated content. There is no regulatory body to ensure the authenticity of information available on it. Anybody can upload anything on internet. This makes Digital Media highly vulnerable and volatile. There is great and urgent need of letting the innocent people know about the reality and compulsions of Mass Media. Hence, Media Information Literacy attains all the more importance in such a vitiated scenario.

The need for media information literacy in India is particularly evident in the current scenario where the country is going through a phase of political polarization. The use of social media platforms tend to spread hate speech, and disinformation campaigns are being carried out to tarnish the reputation of individuals, groups and political rivals. Media Information Literacy can play a crucial role in enabling citizens to identify and counter such propaganda with evidence-based facts and reasoning.

Scope of Media Information Literacy:

The scope of media information literacy is vast and all-encompassing. It includes not only the traditional media sources such as print and broadcast journalism but also the newer forms of media such as social media and online news outlets.

One of the primary goals of media information literacy is to develop critical thinking skills in individuals. This means being able to analyze and evaluate information sources and recognize biases, misinformation, and propaganda. With the rise of fake news and misinformation, media information literacy has become more critical than ever.

Another important aspect of media information literacy is to understand the role of media in society. Media has a significant impact on shaping public opinion and understanding the power dynamics at play is crucial in being a responsible consumer of media. But, presently, it is vying with each other for making the news stories more and more sensational. In this process even the facts are manipulated. There are millions of people who have stopped watching TV News Channels in India just because what they disseminate cannot be regarded as news or information. It is pure propaganda and filthy hate speech. There used to be times when news items were based on facts and facts were regarded as 'sacred'. But now-a-days facts are twisted and interpreted in the way they suit vested interests. People must know the reality behind the camera. It stands true about almost all political parties and political groups.

The scope of MIL in India is vast and multifaceted. It can encompass various topics such as digital literacy, critical thinking, information management and data literacy. MIL can be integrated into various educational and professional settings, including schools, universities, libraries, newsrooms and workplaces. MIL can also serve as a tool in promoting media freedom, transparency and ethical journalism. With proper implementation and support, MIL can contribute to building a more informed and responsible society in India. Developing media information literacy skills is imperative in today's world, where consumption of information is at an all-time high, and critical evaluation skills have become increasingly vital.

Importance of Media Information Literacy:

In today's digital age, media has become an essential part of our lives. We rely on it to consume news, entertain ourselves, interact with others, and even learn new things. However, with the quantity of information available at our fingertips, it is necessary to have media literacy skills to navigate and make sense of what we see and hear.

Identify bias and propaganda:

Media statements can be impacted by different variables, including political, economic, and social objectives. Media literacy enables users to notice and assess the biases and propaganda that may be disguised within the media content. It is crucial to remember that media outlets have diverse agendas and may present information in a way that matches with their objectives

Avoiding Fake News:

In the age of news, fake news has become quite common now. It seems impossible for the viewer and reader to detect and avoid fake news. But on being aware of media literacy, one can avoid these things. On being aware of media literacy, a viewer and reader can detect fake news. It is very important for a typical reader, viewer to know whether the information he is getting is true or fake. In this era of mass communication, Media literacy is very essential in these places.

Digital media platforms such as YouTube and Twitter accounted for a viewership rate of 27.9 billion hours in 2020. For example, it can be understood from the Covid pandemic, the way the same news was presented differently by way of editing on digital platforms. The public was greatly misled and the right thing was not presented clearly. Due to which the users could not find out the correct information. A number of disinformation in the form of fake news was spread about the disadvantages of Covid vaccination. It took people time to understand the advantages of Covid vaccination. That's precisely why India took almost SIX months to bring down the number of active Covid cases. Even now, people are not at all enthusiastic about getting the third dose of Covid vaccination simply because media is busy in broadcasting some other issues. One TV News Channel even predicted a deadly Third wave of Covid way back in mid March, 2022. It kept on debating upon the issue for the entire day and we all stand as witness that there was no fresh deadly Covid wave in last one and a half year. This is an example as to how TV News Channels spread disinformation.

Thus there is a lot of scope for Media Information Literacy in India. Media Literacy encompasses all the Media which are available to people.

Do not deviate from the issues:

In today's era, media sway seems to be increasing day by day, within a few seconds one becomes aware of every news, but sometimes it is also seen that along with the news they want to see. At the same time they go on watching other news also, they deviate from the issue. Fake videos are being shown to people on Digital Platforms. Fake and edited photographs accompany news items on this media that is why it becomes important that people must go for fact checking. But it is not possible for general public who has developed a tendency for trusting in whatever is presented to them in the guise of information or news. That's why it is very important to have media literacy so that the reader and viewer can read and watch whatever news they want in a few seconds.

Hindrances of media literacy:

Lack of Access:

Not everyone has access to quality education or the resources needed to develop media literacy skills. This can create a digital divide and prevent individuals from critically analyzing media content.

Lack of awareness:

At present, there is still a lack of awareness among the people in the society. The roots of media literacy are still weak in the society due to which people wander for correct information and fall prey to fake news. It hinders the development of media literacy.

Information Overload:

As social media and the internet have grown in popularity, there is an excessive amount of information available. It can be difficult to differentiate between reliable and unreliable information which can result in misunderstandings and confusion.

Biased Media:

Media organizations may have their political and ideological biases which can affect the quality of news and prevent the growth of media literacy. This is a very important fact which may well be the reason for sluggish pace of MIL in India. People in politics never want public to become aware about its rights and develop critical thinking because enlightened public does not suit their electoral interests. They want people to depend on and trust whatever they say.

Limited Time:

Everyone might not have the time to analyze all news they receive. This can lead to lack of understanding and acceptance of false information. Millions of news items are published on the walls of digital Media platforms every day. People don't have time to cross check the authenticity of all the information they are being provided.

Language barriers:

Individuals may be unable to access media information in their native language or mother tongue due to language barriers, which may limit their access to the news. Most of the information available on Digital Media in English and the Indians, particularly North Indians, are not much acquainted with this language as they are predominantly Hindi speaking people. Thus linguistic barrier is a big hurdle.

Misleading audios:

It is often heard in digital media that an innocent person has been misled through audio. This is the era of editing. There is plenty of software that can change any audio clip. This edited audio editing may prove harmful as different audio clip's contents can easily be juxtaposed by way of audio editing.

It can be understood from the way people receive fake calls on whatsapp in the name of Kaun Banega Crorepati show. They are given wrong information because of which some people of the society become victims of fraud. People need to be told not to be misled like this and if something like this happens, they should complain about it immediately.

Misleading Visuals, Texts and video Clips:

The way digital media has progressed, in the same way information in visual and audio visual form is being provided to users. Any new issue is added to the old video or any post with the news through editing to make it spicy and shown to the Public. There are some types of messages on social media asking people to forward the message to 15 people and it is said that they will get their recharge done. Click on this link and you will get rupees and Innocent people become part of frauds. Cyber crimes have increased due to lack of awareness.

Role of the media is to make the public aware of the true news in the society. In the same way it is also seen in the present times that the general public is not able to identify the right news. Taking the same news, they give a new look to the news through spicy scenes and editing.

Third person Affect:

Phillips Davison was the first one who articulated the third-person effect hypothesis in 1983. Davison (1983) defines the third-person effect hypothesis as the likelihood that "individuals who are members of an audience that is exposed to a persuasive communication will expect the communication to have a greater effect on others than on themselves." The third-person effect theory suggests that people tend to believe that media messages have a great significant impact on others than on themselves. This phenomenon can have significant implications in different areas, such as marketing, politics, and social issues. For example, politicians may use media messages to influence voters. Such information can be had in plenty during elections in India.

CONCLUSION:

Above discussion makes it crystal clear that we are living in an era of disinformation, misinformation, fake news and fraud. Even highly educated people are becoming the victims of this phenomenon. Sensational news which is entirely wrong as per ethics of journalism reigns supreme these days. There is plenty of disinformation and numerous cyber crimes. As media has become an integral part of our lives, so we the people have to depend on one or the other media for the sake of getting information or news. Vast majority of people are unaware about Fact Checking tools. Really these are very shameful days for media world. If media indulges in such gimmicks one don't know from where to get authentic news and information. Media needs to introspect as running a media house may earn you wealth but its consequences may be far reaching and prove dangerous for the society. While media

needs to mend its ways and return to the basics, which they are unlikely to do, spread of Media Information Literacy is the only way to spread awareness among people in order to combat with the nefarious designs of media.

Media literacy is an essential skill for individuals to develop in today's media-saturated world. It allows people to critically analyze and evaluate the media they consume, helping them to better understand the messages and biases. On getting information about different topics of media literacy, it is clear that it is not mandatory to get a degree to get knowledge of media literacy. The educated classes living in the society also become victims of fake calls, fake videos and text and other new technology. Information about media literacy can prove to be beneficial for the society.

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