CHAPTER-I

AN INTRODUCTION TO CITIZEN JOURNALISM

Introduction

The Journey of journalism witnessed many phases and issues of the society from the child marriage to sati pratha, child abuse to female feticide, dowry to rape cases, corruption to Communalism, inflation to poverty, these and many more on the list. In this journey, Journalism took many turning points. It saw the major technological developments in the 18th century such as the opening of the telegraph in the Calcutta. During this stage, the Indian press comes into its own. Some notable events in this respect are the founding of newspapers, magazines and books.

As technology developed, Radio and Television marked their presence. These both media are designed to tell the citizens about the world around them. The invention of these communication technologies took the revolution in the information world. Moreover there is no limitation of time, distance and literacy. Despite the invention of the radio and the television, and their advantage of being more vivid and attractive in their telling of the same news, the newspaper managed to survive in those days by adapting and keeping up with the times.

The whirl of technologies has dramatically changed the scenario of journalism in the twentieth century. The internet allows instantaneous communication in the world. The internet provides network to be connected virtually. Internet has become
essentially free publishing and distribution network. It changed the paradigm shift in the communication technologies. These digital technologies are named as new media. It is different from the older media due to digitization. It allowed the common man to participate in the media. This way common man started to participate and post their own content.

Communication scholars called this term Citizen Journalism. The citizen Journalism is buzzing phrase these days coined by Clemencia Rodriguez.

According to Wikipedia, The concept of citizen journalism is also known as public, participatory, democratic and guerrilla or street journalism.

Citizen Journalism means Anyone can be a journalist just by taking cell phone photo and produce a piece of journalism, and Citizen journalism is a rapidly evolving form of journalism where common citizens take the initiative to report news or express views about happenings within their community.

It is news of the people, by the people and for the people. Citizen journalists are independent and freelancing reporters. They are not constrained by conventional journalistic processes or methodologies, and they usually function without editorial oversight. Citizen journalists gather, process, research, report, analyze, and publish news and information, most often utilizing a variety of technologies made possible by the internet (Ross & Cormier)
The phenomenon of citizen journalism has been popular by the rise in the availability of the new-media. Dan Gillmor (2006) characterized citizen journalism as mail lists and forums, weblogs, a many to many, and few to few medium. Wikis, SMSs, Mobile-connected cameras, which include the every-day digital cameras that allow users to download, store, edit, and transmit pictures anytime, anywhere.

Internet ‘broadcasting’, whereby ordinary people can record and upload anything on to the Internet, as well as distribute it and RSS (Really Simple Syndication), which allows readers of blogs and other kinds of sites to have their computers and other devices automatically retrieve the content they care about.

Shayman Bowman described Citizen Journalism as an individual “playing role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing & instead disseminating news and information in their report.”

Deuze (2003) theorizes four types of online journalism that are deployed along an axis: mainstream news sites, index and category sites, meta and comment sites, and sites for both sharing and discussion. The horizontal axis, which ranges from left to right, goes from an emphasis on editorial content to an emphasis on public interaction.

Citizen Journalism reverses the Sender – Receiver model. There are no gatekeepers. In the Citizen Journalism, receivers also produce news and publish it online. They have their own press. They are called Citizen Journalists.
New media technology, such as blogs, social networking websites, and usage of mobile phones also made citizen journalism more accessible to people. We now have access to many new technologies to not only consume information but disseminate it ourselves. It has introduced twitter for the first time in India and around the world.

Twitter, although perceived as popular, with millions of active users, is still niche and used by the minority of internet and mobile phone users around the world.

Citizen Journalism came into highlight at the time of US Presidential election due to people’s eroding trust in professional media. As a result, blogging can be seen not only to influence media but to play a significant role to play in political process.

In India, the shock and horror of the Mumbai attacks was another story about the rise of citizen journalism over professional media. On 27th Nov 2008 Militants attacked Taz Mahal hotel in Mumbai. Over the course of 24 hours siege, the citizens commentaries were broadcast over the internet. Videos were uploaded on you tube. Rather professional media repeated the tweets made by the citizens.

Citizen Journalism is not solely restricted to the event of Mumbai attacks. In the case of “Nirbhaya” people outraged against the police and
administration. Citizens tweeted and also uploaded the articles on citizen journalism websites. Citizens created page for movement and called the people for protest on India gate through online posts. This way citizen journalism took place in India.

In the 2003 researcher Mark Deuze categorized the new media world into four types of online journalism: Mainstream news sites Index and category sites meta and comment sites and Share and discussion sites.

In the seminal report “We Media: How Audiences are Shaping the Future of News and Information,” citizen journalism is described as “a citizen or citizens playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, disseminating news and information.” This is the working definition of citizen journalism that will be used for the purposes of this thesis.

1.1 Public Sphere

The online communication experience is become possible by new media technologies. It may be referred to as ‘cyber sphere’. It refers the place where rational, often male-dominated public deliberation takes place. According to habermas (1962/1989) the public sphere arose in the social and political content of 18th & 19th century. Europe around the disclosure that evolved in salons and cafes, as well as in newspapers and other printed forms. Public sphere gave opportunity to citizens to participate in democracy and political processes. It emerges in the encounter between private individuals, with social status, who have certain joint power to resist the
establishment. The people who were not included in the government raised their voice in public sphere and it offered a new type of democracy. The discussions conducted in the habermas were rational and methodical discussion for the social cause.

According to Habermas three important elements shape the public sphere: the first of these is that the public sphere was formed through discussion, often mediated; second it represented a new shape of discussion for many who had previously been excluded. And third ideas presented in the public sphere were considered on the basis of their merits, and not the social standing of the speaker. (Kerlner, 2000)

1.1.1 The Public sphere online

The technologies made possible public sphere online. Internet provided space for discussion. These discussions are often conducted on the political issues. A large shape of public interaction online involves participation in virtual communities. These are online groups in which people connect with others who share the same value, internet or concerns with the exchange info to make friends or emotional support. (Wellman & Guila 1999)

“A public sphere that may be applied to the internet, and that may allow us to identify a space for analysis.” (Poor 2005)
There are tens of thousands of virtual communities which flourish on list
serves, electronic bulletin boards, online chat groups, and role playing sites (Madison,
2006, Papa Charrisi, 2002)

Now a days People prefer to discuss on the online platform. There are many
social networking websites, blogs, and e-news websites where citizens can share their
views and comments about the information. Earlier citizens used to participate in
journalism (NIP 2006) but now they produce a piece of journalism and can upload it
on websites. Though citizen journalism is not new but can be traced back to 18th
century.

As Dan Gilmor says that Individuals have for a long time been able to contribute to the news making process. But Now development of technology encouraged the participation. Now Individual can collaborate with professional journalism. Some media experts say that if professional journalists can give the more valid information then a ordinary citizen.

1.2 Forms of Citizen Journalism

Journalism occurs in many forms. Community Journalism focuses on the local media as only for community and neighbors, rather than state, national or international news. For i.e. JIMS community radio (96.9 MHZ) works for rohini community around the JIMS with the limited range. While civic journalism takes participation from the
community and treats readers and community as participants (Professor David, K. Perry).

Collaborative journalism is also a separate concept and is the practice of professional and non-professional journalists working together. For example, CNN – IBN News channel telecasts the Citizen Journalist show and seeks for stories produced by citizen journalists.

According to the NACJ, just because someone uses a cell phone camera to photograph an incident and then uploads it to Facebook or any other social networking website, it does not make that person a citizen journalist.

Accidental journalists are people who are caught unexpectedly in the middle of an event and take photos or videos and upload them to either social networking websites such as Facebook, or Twitter, or news websites such as IBN7 citizen journalism show (CJ show).

Advocacy journalism is a form of journalism that adopts a viewpoint for the sake of advocating on behalf of a social, political, business or religious purpose.

Citizen journalism is self-regulated. Sometimes, citizen journalists find themselves being members of online communities, such as discussion forums,
etc. In this case, it is possible to find aspects of self-regulation which are group-based.

So citizen journalism should not be confused with the other forms of journalism. Citizen journalism a new phrase these days. People are not much aware about this new phrase though they participate with professional journalism ,social networking websites and Blogs. That is called collaborative journalism not citizen journalism.

1.2.1 Filling the local news gap

Today people have multiple 24-7 news channels to get information still are suffering for local news. It seems strange, in our day of multiple news channels, the always-on Internet to say that we don’t have enough news," writes Lisa Williams.

Most of the media covers the news happen to more than 500 feet outside the cities and towns. "It’s hard to find good information about the place where you live." Vipul Upadhayay describes his own experiences trying to fill the gap with town, his citizen journalism website Merinews for Delhi, NCR.

Citizen journalism, Upadhayay says, takes real work and a different objectives than professional media. Citizen Journalism fills the gap with local news. Because everyone wants to know that what is going on in their neighborhood. Rather Professional media sometimes adopts the news from citizen journalism website.
1.3 Dimensions of Citizen journalism

The most visible dimension of citizen journalism is the participation of citizens in the news production of news channels that invite contributions from within India and across the globe. Most of the channels produced content by the citizens as an essential element of their output. CNN and India business news (CNN-IBN), and NDTV, widely watched news channels texts force courts to reopen longstanding unresolved criminal cases and to expedite the delivery of justice.

The CNN-IBN and IBN7 news broadcasts a bulletin called CJ show for which the running order is voted on by viewers. Channels broadcasted in Hindi, English and several other Indian languages use such strategies to highlight the ways in which ordinary people are actively engaged in the collating and presenting of news.

The new trend of uploading video clips by the common man on the news websites. It has resulted in tremendous changes in television news. As the mobile cameras have become a common electronic device in Indian urban middle class homes. The common viewers can also shoot and share it with the world through the camera or mobile camera. This possibility has explored completely new kind of public space which is more democratic in nature. In many cases common people use camera as a tool for fighting corruption.
1.4 Citizen Journalism and Professional media

Citizen Journalism is for ordinary people and by ordinary people. It is a individual-centered, largely online. Professional journalism is structured around sources of news. These sources of news tend to be ‘official’ and ‘valid’ sources, ensconced in their positions of power. The most powerful sources of news tend to be politicians, businesspeople, NGOs, and the like. These are elite sources of information who might claim to ‘represent’ the people.

Moreover, Professional Media gives works to the traditional definitions of news which emphasize very important persons, controversy, conflict, unusualness, and the like (Galtung & Ruge 1969). These definitions are restrictive though scenario of professional media is changing. Now they encourage citizens to participate with them. Still it is not for ordinary people. If something happens to ordinary people, as long as there is no for very important person to quote, it is not newsworthy. For example, a murder incident matters if it is associated with a famous person or celebrity. But if it is associated with a common man then that is not newsworthy for professional media.

The structured nature of professional media thus tends to be exclusive in its selection of stories and their sources.
It is important to restate why Professional journalism is seen as ‘undemocratic’: against citizen journalism. It takes a lot of courage for editors to balance the news which makes profit and democracy as well.

By suggesting that Professional Media is undemocratic, citizen journalism seeks to open it up to the participation of ordinary people. Citizen journalism is thus aimed at de-institutionalizing and de-professionalizing the practice of journalism.

This is a never-ending debate – Most of the citizens and professional journalists would be disagree that professional media is undemocratic. Since some of the journalists think that citizen journalism is not as accurate as professional media due to its sources and resources. But some of the ordinary people would agree that professional media is undemocratic since there is less participation of citizens. Moreover professional media avoids the local issues which are important for the ordinary citizens.

Some Critics of this phenomenon including professional journalists claim that citizen journalism is unregulated and amateurish in the quality of coverage. Because it is done by non-professional journalists who are not trained or bound to any organization. While citizen journalists claim that citizen journalism is free from biasness and free from political pressure.
1.5 Citizen Journalism and Internet

The Internet is the first medium which provides the space for individuals to communicate throughout the globe in their own voices. Thus the purely technical possibilities for the Internet as a public sphere are unlimited.

Most of us today cannot remember the world without email, instant messaging and google. Internet has revolutionized mass media in such a way that people now think of time as pre-Internet and post-Internet. However, in the short span of ten years, the growth of the Internet has been staggering.

Table 1.1 The Rise of Internet

McLuhan's Global Village is a reality. The following table shows the incredibly fast evolution of the Internet from 2005 till the present time:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number of Users</th>
<th>%World Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 2005</td>
<td>938 millions</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2006</td>
<td>1.043 millions</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2007</td>
<td>1,173 millions</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2008</td>
<td>1,463 millions</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2009</td>
<td>1,669 millions</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 2010</td>
<td>1,966 millions</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The latest research Internet in India 2014 jointly conducted by IAMAI and IMRB International; finds that internet usage in India has gone up by 32 Per cent from October 2013 to October 2014, following are the details.

**Table 1.2 Internet growth in India**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>278 Million</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct 2014</td>
<td>278 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 2014</td>
<td>302 Million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As of October 2014, there were 278 million claimed internet users and is expected to reach 302 million by Dec 2014.
### Table 1.3 Internet Users in Urban Cities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Internet Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct 2014</td>
<td>177 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 2014</td>
<td>190 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp. June 2015</td>
<td>216 Million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Internet World stats.com)

Claimed Internet Users in Urban Cities has grown by 29 Per cent from Oct 213 to reach 177 Million in Oct 2014. It is expected to reach 190 Million by Dec 2014 and 216 Million by June 2015.

### Table 1.4 Internet Users in Rural India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Internet Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct 2014</td>
<td>101 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 2014</td>
<td>112 Million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exp. June 2015</td>
<td>138 Million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Internet World stats.com)
Compared to last year, claimed internet users have increase by 39 per cent in rural India to reach 101 million in October 2014, 112 million in Dec 2014.

Internet has taken revolution because of its global reach. It is the medium that has been able to integrate all other forms of mass communication. While the television combined only audio and video, the Internet meets “all the capabilities of the older media.” The Internet also embraces interactivity.

The internet has come to accommodate a range of websites for social networking, disseminating news and collaborating in its production and sharing photos video and audio, to name some of the most obvious. On these platforms spaces, people debate, play, trade ideas and collaborate to solve problems; they exchange with each other many types of information about themselves and the world around them in a range formats.

1.6 Web 2.0

Web 2.0 is more advance than web 1.0. Web 2.0 is a platform where new technologies have been built and it gives opportunities to the user to create their own content. The difference between web 1.0 and web 2.0 is that there were few content creators with the large number of users or consumers of information. Thus the notion of web 2.0 is broad in scope, as it aims to capture not only the participatory characters but also the technological environment that facilitates them.
After the invention of Web 2.0, it is possible to imagine internet-connected rural areas, complete with tele-centres that can be used for exchanging information about agricultural produce, markets, governance, and the like. Countries like India and Malaysia are trying out these experiments, in some cases using the so-called Alcatel-Lucent motorized broadband community centers.

1.7 Merinews

In 2006, the first Indian website wholly devoted to citizen journalism was set up named Merinews (My news) and with the objective “Power to people” it hails itself as “Indian’s first citizen journalism news portal” Six months into its operation, it won the manthan award for publishing the best e news content in India for the year, and in 2007 it was an official honor at the webby awards.

Upadhayaaya (2008) the sites founder and editor calls Merinews a product with mission: a people ‘s news platform of the people, for the people, providing power to people and empowering democracy”. It also runs a campaign to create a citizens manifesto for India’s next 60 years. A Blueprint for the future of the nation –which is also meant to reinvigorate citizens participation in the political process.

The idea is to provide a platform for issues and opinions of people who may not find space in the mainstream news India and in the process, further democratize India’s public sphere.

The website publishes news content that is written by citizens as well as journalists keen to highlight issues that are neglected in the mainstream news media. Since the early 1990’s when a focus on profit led to a perceived “dumbing down” of
news content and “murdochization” entrenched itself (Somulkar 2002) several socially relevant beats such as education, health rural development and agriculture have been abolished in the newsroom of the mainstream news media.

Websites such as Merinews have taken up reporting such beats to highlight the plight and problems of developing India even though its impact is not yet clear. In a society that was until the early 1990s served by the relatively stand and most officially driven print media, citizen participation is gradually transforming traditional –top down official led definition of journalism.

The citizen journalism website Merinews doesn’t work like a gatekeeper for information but keeps some guidelines to post any content on the website.

*The Merinews editorial guidelines* for contributions and comments.

(source: merinews.com)

Merinews welcomes the interaction and discussion with their readers as possible still there are some guidelines for posting comments so that the content could be checked for its authenticity and to make the website more mature. The guidelines are below:

The first guideline is for submitting the article is the person should have exclusive rights over the content. if it is already published on another website or a magazine then the copyright should be held by the contributor so that only
his name can be associated with the article. Merinews reserves the right to accept or deny publishing.

The second guideline is the length of an article. It should not be less than 300 words. It seeks the breaking news in the lesser words. The other guideline is the authenticity of language. The article must have proper sentence structure, grammar, spelling, punctuation and capitalization. Submissions should have basic consistency of language and should adhere to basic formatting guidelines given in the left column.

The content should have quality and editorial standard though Merinews encourages the people to participate and publish their content. But since it is called citizen journalism so it follows the journalistic standard. Merinews doesn’t publish the article which is already published anywhere. It follows a plagiarism policy.

The contributors must keep in mind that while writing a title for an article, they must ensure that it summarizes the crux of the article and is not misleading and phishing.

Merinews does not allow excessive self or brand promotion. The articles must not be promotional or overtly indulge in self-advocacy, advocacy of clicking on advertisements and similar such activities.

Contributions cannot be pornographic, defamatory, inflammatory, obscene, abusive, contain hate speech, encourage illegal or discriminatory content or infringe
the rights of any third party. This is not an exhaustive list and any determination of violation of content guidelines solely vests with Merinews.

Contributors must mention the source used to create content and all quotes in the articles should be attributed. Data and statistics obtained for writing articles should also be attributed to original sources to ensure that there is no violation of copyright.

These above are the guidelines for submitting articles on Merinews. Some media experts raise the question of authenticity of news or given by citizen journalists because they are not professionally trained. But above guidelines show that there is also a editorial department who does not work as a gate keeper but checks the authenticity and stop the obscenity.
1.8 Citizen journalism, participation, and empowerment

To speak of citizen journalism is to invoke the idea of citizen participation and empowerment. It is important therefore to spend some time dissecting the idea of citizen empowerment because it is so often associated with the concept of citizen
journalism and the so-called liberating power of new media technologies that make citizen journalism possible.

The concept of empowerment is important for several reasons. Firstly, it is a word in political currency. Not a single politician can be said not to have used this word on some occasion or other. The development community is particularly credited with having used, and perhaps abused, the word. There are countless nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that claim to work for the empowerment of communities. International organizations, including intergovernmental ones, are clearly among those that cling to the frequent usage of this term.

Secondly, the word needs unpacking because of the abuse to which it has become captive. Because of its overuse, it can mean everything or nothing. It can be invoked to cover a multitude of political, social and economic ‘sins’.

Thirdly, laying it bare could possibly help to reclaim its analytic and empirical potential. It is a very useful concept and we need to be clear about what it could mean for the practice of our citizen journalism and therefore politics.

In other words, we need to challenge our attitude towards the conceptual possibilities and the practical implications it carries for our political sphere in the ‘information’ age.
1.9 The purpose of the Study

The Study seeks to document the content, reach, participation of citizen journalism and attitude of professional journalists towards citizen journalism. Researcher would collect the sample for survey to know about the participation of people in citizen journalism and took the interviews of professionals to know their attitude towards citizen journalism. Researcher analyzed the content of citizen journalism website through the method content analysis and made a comparison between citizen journalism website and mainstream website.

1.10 Significance of the study

Firstly, this project has great social and academic significance as it deals with a current phenomenon that is pertinent to our abilities to be well-informed citizens of a democratic society. The events such as the Mumbai terror attacks in 2009 show how citizen journalism played an active role in shaping media coverage in the immediate aftermath.

An ordinary person captured the picture of terrorist kasab with mobile phone, and posted online within an hour of its occurrence. Over the next few hours, news organizations such as the zee news, aaj tak, and the ndtv and many other professional news organizations jumped on this picture and used it in their breaking news reports.
This camera phone picture, taken by an ordinary Indian at a place and time that was not accessible to the cameramen of professional media, has come to define the Mumbai terror attacks, lok sabha election and demonstrates how the relationship between mass media and society is changing.

1.10 Conclusion

So far citizen journalism in India has had an impact mainly in situations of crisis (tsunami, earthquake, rains), but it is slowly exerting influence in politics by exposing corruption and in society by highlighting issues such as sexual harassment.
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