The changing face of Journalism

Has journalism changed? The best person to answer this is Shishir Joshi, the group editor of India’s largest selling tabloid, Midday.

Having been in this industry for almost 20 years, it has been a fascinating experience for this 37-year-old man. People get in journalism by choice, but Shishir Joshi landed by default. “It was the charm of working more than being employed in a newspaper,” he expresses.

He started off by writing for a newspaper and its Sunday magazine. “The magazine editor was also my English professor, who instigated me to make writing as a habit. Then a friend’s elder brothers friend (you can imagine how distant this connection was), asked me to fill in as a summer job because a reporter was on leave. That’s how I started working.”

He worked for six months and then took a break for his exams. But, by then he was addicted to working. “When all others around you, are studying, and you are studying and working (especially in a newspaper, where your byline appears, you become famous it’s a kick you get addicted to) I got addicted to it. I still love my byline,” he says. Later, it became a passion and instead of opting for a profession or the armed forces (despite being selected or studying for it), he opted for media.

On the concept of breaking news being changed, the editor comments, “Even in television, there were no 24-hour channels earlier. Today, every minute there is something happening. So there is nothing wrong if there is BREAKING news. What’s gone wrong is how it’s been defined. That perspective has changed.”

“To every one right, there have been five wrongs which are taking place. But, the television is nascent in India. We are very different from what we were three years ago. A few years later much will change again. I am optimistic,” he adds.

When it comes to newspapers, the concept of breaking news does not happen. “But then there is always sensationalism to attract the readers. That too has relatively reduced as television has managed to take the chunk of the pie. At times you have web versions of newspapers thriving with the BREAKING news,” he says further.

Media has changed a lot since the time he started off. “When I was young as one says it, there were no mobile phones, TV cameras or web version. Blogs? One wouldn’t imagine something like this can exist. E-paper? Podcast? OB Van? The only thing common then was a journalism course which still exists. Though in a highly professional and evolved form. What has changed is also reading habits. In those days, people read. Now they surf. Or Google.”

People feel that journalism has become sham where journalists are paid to write good or bad about people. “There are bad apples everywhere. Journalism is evolving from news reporting to writing columns and now you have opinionated reportage. Media net is another development which is referred to as paid news reporting. We have advertorials. Every form of journalism has its debatable elements. What is important is, whether what you read in the paper, is based on merit, or not. If it has found space on merit, in its totality, then there is nothing wrong. Journalism is not a sham. It is going through its downs at certain levels. But, bad apples notwithstanding, objective journalism and honest prevails,” he elaborates.

The news has lost its importance. It’s gossip that we are trying to find in news. Not only journalism but the readers choice has also changed.

The way news was covered 10 years back and is covered today has surely changed. “But the basic rules of journalism haven’t. There is a nose for news, thorough research and cross-checking of facts, reporting and not giving opinions are still an indelible part of journalism. Today, most stories that come to journalists are because there is a vested interest involved. Hence, the reason to follow the rules needs to be adhered to,” he expresses.

On entering the private of masses and hurting their sentiments, as in the case of Aarushi Talwar, the group editor says, “There is nothing wrong if you are entering into the private domain of an individual to investigate. But, to not speculate. Be objective and fair. The reporter’s role is to report. Not comment. That’s what has gone wrong in Aarushi case. Journalism has rules which need to be followed such as protecting the identity of a rape victim, not carrying pictures of minors etc. In Aarushi case, a lot of bad happened when basic rules were broken. Not because they got into the private lives of the family.”

Working in media has being existing for this gentleman. “Earlier, every four years it seemed there was a change happening around you and now, it’s almost every second day. Either in the product, design, profiles, technology, distribution or style of news presentation,” he explains.

Ask him about one story as a turning point in his life and he laughs, “To be honest every story has been a learning point in itself.” He concludes are conversation by saying that the future of journalism is the four magic words: “multi-skilling, multimedia, speed and concise.”

"“Journalism has changed a lot from People oriented content to Advertiser/Marketed oriented. It’s more of advertising media rather than social media to convey messages.”

Hussain Sharif
client servicing executive.

"“Journalism has certainly changed. Journalism was earlier about gathering and disseminating news that is essential, and in some essence helpful to the masses. But, now it’s all about the number of people you attract.”

Saif Khan
trainee editor.

"“The news has lost it’s importance. It’s gossip that we are trying to find in news. Not only journalism but the readers choice has also changed.”

Samruddhi Roge
advertising student.

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