

**ST. JOSEPH’S UNIVERSITY, BANGALORE – 27**

**I BA JOURNALISM**

**END SEMESTER EXAM: MAY 2023**

**JOURNALISM AND WRITING: JNE 221**

**Time- 2 HOURS Max Marks- 60**

**Instructions:**

1. **This paper has FOUR SECTIONS and THREE printed pages.**
2. **This paper is for the II Semester BA JP/JS students.**
3. **You are allowed to use a dictionary.**

**I. The following is an excerpt from a piece titled ‘Journalism Under Siege’ by Samanth Subramanian published in Rest of World. Read the passage and answer the questions that follow.**

Even before the pandemic, India’s newspapers were under siege. In part, this was due to the decline in advertising revenue afflicting media everywhere. But it was also due to the kinds of control the government exerts over this sector. India’s newspapers are finding, for instance, that the government will pull its valuable advertising from their pages if they criticize its policies. Modi’s administration has limited foreign ownership of online news portals to a 26% stake — a move that, coincidentally or otherwise, affected a number of the digital newsrooms that have been better able to hold the government to account by staying independent of its advertising. Editors, publishers, and journalists live in constant fear of being charged under a colonial-era sedition[law](https://cpj.org/2020/05/indian-journalist-dhaval-patel-arrested-charged-wi/), harassment by tax authorities, and assaultby the BJP and its supporters. Some outlets appear to have adjusted by turning into compliant vehicles for the state: India’s best-known news anchor spends his evenings shouting down his own guests in defense of the government and its priorities.

And then there’s social media. Around 400 million Indians use WhatsApp, 270 million are on Facebook, 120 million are on Instagram, and around 20 million are on Twitter — an ecosystem that heaves with misinformation. Some of this is ordinary rumor, half-digested, quarter-understood scraps of hearsay. But a lot of it consists of deliberately planted misinformation and distortions. Reportersfrom *HuffPost India*found that the BJP had set up a fake-news factory to peddle lies during elections: edited videos, Facebook posts, websites masquerading as news portals. (*HuffPost* *India* shut down in November, partly because of the government’s edict on foreign ownership of digital media.) The head of the BJP’s information technology cell routinely shares misleading or outright incorrect information. These falsehoods find their way into the mainstream media — and, in particular, into television news shows. Three years ago, one channel reported, in total seriousness, the fabrication that the 16th-century astrologer Nostradamus had predicted Modi’s rise to leadership.

The yawning deficit of reliable news and the surplus of propaganda and lies have, in conjunction, contorted how people think and behave. More often than not, the effects favor the BJP and its particular agendas. A study by a University of Pennsylvania political scientist, surveying 1,200 Indians during the 2019 general election, showed that more people tend to buy the untruths spread by the Hindu right. Nearly 44% believed that India had suffered no terrorist attacks since Modi came to power, for instance — a nugget of misinformation that supports the BJP’s claim to be keeping India strong, especially against the old enemy Pakistan.

Violence is born out of WhatsApp texts. Sometimes these involve vigilante plots to lynch Muslims or to attack presumed cow smugglers and beef eaters. (The protection of the cow, an animal sacred to some Hindus, is one of the BJP’s pet causes.) On other occasions, people have [beaten](https://www.wired.com/story/how-whatsapp-fuels-fake-news-and-violence-in-india/) unknown men to death on the empty suspicion that they were kidnappers. These acts were fueled by dishonest WhatsApp forwards, of alleged events that didn’t even happen in India: a child-safety video purporting to show a kidnapping in progress, an image of dead boys and girls in Syria mislabeled as victims of local child-rustlers. Brutalities like these aren’t tied to any of the BJP’s explicit goals. But they align with the party’s instinct to create and exploit fault lines, and to keep people in a state of mistrust, with the possibility of violence never far away.

In the social media age, India’s ruling politicians have realized that narratives are endlessly malleable. Versions of the truth can easily be masked or supplanted. If no one knows what to believe, anything can be claimed or contested. Preventing journalists from doing their job is one method of controlling the story; seeding the news with fictions is another. Cutting off access to information altogether, as the BJP has done through internet shutdowns during times of unrest, is a third. The arrival of the coronavirus has muddied the news stream further still. And it has offered yet another way for the government to curb journalists who are trying to do their jobs.

**I.A Answer the following questions in about 3-5 lines EACH (3x5=15)**

1. Have you come across people in your life whose thoughts and behaviours are ‘contorted by the yawning deficit of reliable news’? Why do you think this happens?
2. To someone who consumes their news from WhatsApp forwards, explain why they mustn’t believe all messages they receive.
3. What do you understand from the phrase ‘narratives are endlessly malleable’, in the context of news?

**II. The following is an excerpt from a piece titled ‘Instagram Shouldn’t Be Your Main Source of News.’ Read the passage and answer the question that follows.**

Every day I come across a carousel of Instagram stories on my feed, plastered with neatly designed visuals that aim to explain complex topics in bitesize slides to anyone who may be unfamiliar to them. Infographics, which have traditionally served as tools to accompany and underscore longer sources of information, have now slowly grown on the platform to become appealing candidates for self-sufficient online informants. From bits of advice on mental health and fitness to expositions of social justice and environmental issues, they have turned into an essential instrument for different ideas, news, and resources to proliferate.

As part of this newer — and possibly more impatient — generation that grew up surrounded by fast-paced technology, I understand why: these infographics are engaging, straightforward, and aesthetically pleasing. I, for one, have used them as comforting mental health reminders, and as handy starting points to educate myself more extensively on histories that I didn’t get to learn in school.

However, while it is one thing to get inspired and prompted by a post to learn more about a particular topic, it is another to take everything that is written inside a well-edited coloured square as gospel. Although they do have great potential in raising awareness on important matters, I believe that this newfound reliance on viral infographics has strong limitations that predominantly stem from our passive consumption of social media.

**II.A Answer the following question in about 150 words (15 Marks)**

4. Does your experience of the internet align with the one described above. What are some of the ‘strong limitations’ of this kind of consumption of media? Answer using examples from your own engagement with social media apps. What must one do to consume news more efficiently on the internet?

**III. Answer the following questions in about 100-150 words EACH (2x10=20)**

5. Borges describes the labyrinth thus — “Before I discovered this letter, I kept asking myself how a book could be infinite. I could not imagine any other than a cyclic volume, circular. A volume whose last page would be the same as the first and so have the possibility of continuing indefinitely. I recalled, too, the night in the middle of The Thousand and One Nights when Queen Scheherezade, through a magical mistake on the part of her copyist, started to tell the story of The Thousand and One Nights, with the risk of again arriving at the night upon which she will relate it, and thus on to infinity. I also imagined a Platonic hereditary work, passed on from father to son, to which each individual would add a new chapter or correct, with pious care, the work of his elders.” Pick one aspect of this definition that allows you to think about the internet differently. Explain why.

6. In her essay ‘The I In The Internet’, Jia Tolentino points out that the early stages of the internet was called Web 1.0 and then came Web 2.0 and so forth. Come up with a name for the current version of the internet we’re experiencing. Which app dominates this experience? Explain your answer.

**IV. Answer the following question (10 marks)**

7. Write a twitter essay of at least four tweets, convincing interested students to enrol in BA Journalism.

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