

## Churnalism+

Mrittunjoy Guha Majumdar\*

Department of Physics and Astrophysics, University of Delhi, India

Writing something with a title comprising of the portmanteau of 'churn' and 'journalism' can be misleading: my article is hardly an exercise in linguistics or morphology. The word 'churnalism' was coined by Karin Wahl-Jorgensen in 'The Handbook of Journalism Studies', as mentioned in Wikipedia, with its 'omniscience' limited to the strength of its crowd-sourcing. As the origins of the portmanteau suggest, *Churnalism* is the kind of journalism that bears a lot of resemblance to stock churning: as in the latter, the former involves excessive back-and-forth 'trading' of the sensibilities of the consumers to strike up a 'healthy' rating in the public domain; the more *themasala*, the more the *chutnification*, the better. *Churnalism* is a term that describes a number of ill practices in journalism today, be it plagiarism or pre-packaged news-bites.

The reason I have titled this article as *Churnalism+* instead of just *Churnalism* is because the original definition of the term is defined as the practice of fishing out news reports on the basis of press-releases and wire-reports. As is wont of the generation, it is my theoretical construct—and a practice seen in certain cases—that a journalist today would rather 'manufacture' some news than take the trouble of going through the PR roll. Unravel the 'pre-packaged breaking news' that you packaged initially to a gaping audience. Word-play? Hardly. This is what I call *Churnalism* of GenY or *Churnalism+*.

The recent case of 'real-time coverage for capturing the culprits live' of a molestation case in Guwahati and the subsequent *hungama* by the firebrand peasant-leader-turned-moral-messiah Akhil Gogoi may be an example of *Churnalism+*. It was probably because this particular case had two things going for it: the prime accused Amarjyoti Kalita's upstart nature that led him to carry out the heinous task AND upload the video, and the national news channels' quickness in catching the scent in time, that it came out as a serious crime against womanhood. Although the gravity of the crime was highlighted, the aftermath of the case was mostly embroiled in the protest marches by Gogoi against News Live, a front-runner among the news channels of the Assamese media and incidentally owned by the spouse of Himanta

Biswa Sarma, State Minister with the portfolios of Health and Family Welfare, Education and Implementation of Assam Accord (*Source: Official Website of The Govt. of Assam*) and a man with a political clout probably next to only that of the CM Shri Tarun Gogoi. Though it is yet to be proven, the very idea of *Churnalism+* being practiced in Indian media is not ill-founded.

*Churnalism+* is a dangerous tool in the hands of a media hungry for kudos even at the expense of morality and ethics. If there is even an iota of truth in the allegations that Akhil Gogoi is levelling against News Live, then the whole idea of media-liberty and unhindered freedom of expression stands as a flawed practice that needs censure. It is like the fake-encounters that certain police-personnel carry out for petty gratification. Such incidents only project a crude cut in the gem that our forebears envisioned the media as, in our country.

Paid news has been a major issue plaguing the Indian media. The Radia-tapes incident brought to the fore the appreciable amount of influence that lobbyists have on the Indian media. Something that had dimensions relating to rural India was the case of GM Bt. Cotton crops in India. The furore over the rosy picture that a certain nation daily had sketched of the ground reality received national attention. This was a blatant and condemnable attempt by certain media-persons to condition the views of a section of society to the line they had been paid to portray. Thankfully, awareness generation of any contemporary society is not confined to a single channel of news today. Even with the clamour of the news-channels on television with all their Breaking News and special reports streaming out of the idiot box every passing hour, and the dailies with their op-eds, the viewer/reader often fails to look through the veils of biased reportage.

Gone are the days when *Doordarshan* and AIR were the iconic elements of Indian media. Gone are the days when ideals were sacrosanct for the scribes. *Churnalism+* is a reality of the day and needs to be fought against in the same spirit as we are all fighting for a potent Lok-Pal.

\*Corresponding author: Mrittunjoy Guha Majumdar, Department of Physics and Astrophysics, University of Delhi, India, Tel: 91-11-27667725; E-mail: [mgm913@gmail.com](mailto:mgm913@gmail.com)

Received March 11, 2014; Accepted September 01, 2014; Published September 08, 2014

Citation: Majumdar MG (2014) Churnalism+. J Mass Communicat Journalism 4: 220 doi:[10.4172/2165-7912.1000220](https://doi.org/10.4172/2165-7912.1000220)

Copyright: © 2014 Majumdar MG. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.