

## **BOOK OF ABSTRACTS**

**Insiyah Vahanvaty and Aasim Khan**

### **Journalism disrupted- Politics of truth telling in an ethnonationalist climate**

Amid the rise of ethnonationalism, India is witnessing an increasing trend of media capture by the state which is enacted in a variety of ways including the offering of incentives and application of coercive or punitive measures. Assigned the task of national opinion creation and management of dissent, the Indian media can be understood to be actively engaging in manufacturing post truth narratives to further political agendas which often include the validation of hate politics and necessitate a deterioration of minority rights. The capitulation of the media to the state has resulted in myth making having gained more relevance than verifiable reportage leading to a dramatic shift in the Indian media landscape. This transformation is concerning, as the compromise of the fourth estate violates the rights of citizens and their ability to participate in governance and is therefore ultimately understood as a reduction of democracy.

**Nazneen Shekh**

### **Digital Divide and Media Literacy: Contextualizing Disruptions, Learnings and Practices**

In the post-truth era, digital proliferation is happening at a rapid pace. Its integration into our everyday lives and influence on the economy, culture, society, and beliefs raises crucial questions about the nature and extent of digital impact. The information age entails social media feeds being driven by algorithms, tracking of online activity, online hate speech, and collection of personal data among its many other ramifications. Research reveals that India is growing to be a mobile-focused market and the share of users accessing news online is growing exponentially.

This growth amid fake news, surveillance, data privacy breaches, echo chambers, and polarization, makes human interactions online and offline increasingly complex. This rising complexity coupled with limited to no knowledge of new media available to the masses poses a grave concern to the mediated society. The convoluted architecture of New media systems and Web 2.0 is difficult to navigate not just for digital immigrants but also for digital natives. This makes crucial the interrogation of the presupposition that those who are born in the digital era readily possess digital skills.

The relationship between digital natives and digital skills becomes a critical area of inquiry to understand its interrelation with the larger framework of media, education, skills and the internet. This exploration seeks to look at the broader education structures and places focus on the intersection between critical thinking skills, digital literacy and education.

Ideosync Media Combine (IMC) is a communication for social change organisation based in New Delhi NCR. Our current work on Digital Media and Information Literacy (DMIL) in Delhi government schools with high school students and our work with young girls in peri-urban villages of Delhi and Haryana are central to this study. Data collected from open-ended questionnaires, pre and post-assessment, in-depth interviews, roundtable discussions and trainers' field notes would inform this paper. Through this paper, we intend to highlight young students' narratives, perceptions, and sociocultural contexts to articulate their everyday digital practice. It further looks at social, digital and structural constraints that affect access, adoption and effective usage of digital. It would contribute to the current discourse on the

digital landscape, and gaps that exist in media and information literacy-related skills amongst the youth and would advance understanding of the digital era. It would further address interventions required to overcome challenges faced by adolescents.

### **Jean-Thomas Martelli**

#### **Anti-Muslim Ideology as Entertainment Nationalism on Indian TV: The Case of the Debate (2017-2022)**

### **Lorna MacBean and Jessica Reid**

#### **Creating an academic ‘biosphere’: the case of the Symposia for Seventeenth-Century Scottish Literatures**

This paper addresses the use of Zoom as a disruptive technology to progress the study of Scotland’s seventeenth century. This is a literary period which, until recently, has received scant scholarly attention due to a perceivable ideological reluctance to disengage from the totalising dominant narrative in histories of Scottish literature. In 2021, we organised the very first Symposium for Seventeenth-Century Scottish Literature. We were driven by our discontent at the current state of the field to devise a new mode of research dissemination and scholarly communion using Zoom meetings as our medium. By reimagining and experimenting with traditional research presentation formats, our symposium, which we held again in 2022, gathered scholars to discuss current research in seventeenth-century Scottish literature over Zoom. The intellectual gain was greater than the event itself: by gathering scholars to discuss a hitherto neglected area of research online, the symposium both disrupted traditionally dismissive narratives of the Scottish seventeenth century and devised new ways of reporting research to the wider community. The following paper offers an account of the symposia, outlines our rationale and how this resulted in practical success, and provides evidence for how overcoming limiting boundaries (geographic, economic, and in terms of access) can drive scholarly excellence.

### **Prof. Maya Dodd**

#### **Digital Archives for a Digital Commons**

A focus on open access is much needed for the actualisation of knowledge societies, and this is easily possible with digital archives. Such archives especially afford the tools to catalogue and cross reference under-examined narratives of community knowledge, and can kindle new ecosystems of storytelling and inspired research in addition to academic study. These new registers, created through digital technologies espousing open access, often cross-question official narratives and enable a multiplication of viewpoints, languages and forms for the co-creation of public scrutiny and inclusive accountability.

### **Puthiya Puravil Sneha**

#### **Digital Humanities in India: Disruptive Enough?**

The field of digital humanities (DH) has piqued the interest of researchers and practitioners across several disciplines and areas of work, including but not limited to academia, computing, open knowledge and creative practice to name just a few. In a time of ‘disruptive innovation and technologies’, the growth of fields like DH has signalled a shift, particularly in the methods, scholarship and practice of the humanities, and their engagement with the internet and digital technologies. Importantly, questions of DH’s epistemological stake, being

at the centre of these changes, continue to remain an important point of debate in related areas such as feminist, postcolonial and now multilingual DH, and are further reflected for instance in global efforts to 'decolonise DH'.

Drawing upon some of these ongoing conversations, and recent work on digital language practices at CIS, this brief presentation will aim to explore and reflect upon learnings and emerging questions, especially after the disruption that the pandemic has been, and how they may inform ongoing work in these spaces. Importantly, it will seek to unpack the nature of these shifts in the politics and practice of humanities with the growth of fields like DH, and if such disruption may be channelised further to build more inclusive and accessible internets.

### **Sara Padín Castro**

#### **Transmedia influence on television series**

Cyberculture is defined by its hypertextuality and its interactivity (Levy, 2007). The language has changed and the channel is no longer unique. As in other fields, the creators of television productions have gone from monomedia to multimedia (Amador, 2013) and the audience has reacted to it. The recipient no longer consumes passively, but instead becomes proactive and pro-designer of content (Toffler, 1980). This causes the opening of a much richer textual discourse, but also an audience that moves between screens and narratives that is willing to remix content (Scolari, 2016), achieving what Jenkins, Ford and Green define as transmedia culture (2015). According to them, a culture in which it is difficult to measure the audience from a traditional perspective, since, due to hypertextuality, another phenomenon is produced, that of engagement, a brand commitment that the viewer acquires with the product (Buckner and Rutledge, 2011) which is influenced by the branding strategy in the market (Askwith, 2007) and which directly affects television creation and design itself.

### **Shivangi Narayan**

This paper wants to look into the many ways in which knowledge is constructed in the facial recognition industry, especially for use in policing systems. Technology has infiltrated policing in a big way in the 21st century; while partially used to make the police resource efficient, tech is used primarily for its promise of a bias free, objective and neutral policing. This helps the officers defer accountability to the tech while perpetuating similar biases as before. Several scholars have argued that the use of tech simply provides a veneer of legitimacy to already prejudiced systems and does not bring in any fairness, as is its claim

Not only is the accuracy and the potential to recognise faces correctly of this tech questionable, it is also found to be biased against marginalised communities, especially in the context of policing. In this paper, I want to look into facial recognition tool developers to understand the ways in which they design, manufacture and sell this tool as a policing aid in spite of its documented issues related to policing of the marginalized. The most important question that this paper would be asking is the way in which manufacturers, essentially software developers and engineers from elite universities and organisations in India and in the US, frame the question of criminality. How does this framing intersect with the already existing prejudices regarding crime and criminality in India? Is this framing done in the context of the already existing biases against certain castes, communities and gender being inherently criminal?

In understanding these questions, we not only try to investigate the tech industry and the various ways in which it works to present an illusion of objectivity when there is none and

thus perpetuating the marginalised of already discriminated communities, we also try to demonstrate the ways in which governance is depoliticised by using tech to fix social problems.

**Ayesha Gautam, Deepa Singh**

### **Samvād as Schema and Praxis for Resolving the Knots of Technoethics**

Emerging technologies pose ever increasingly complex epistemological, ethical and political challenges. Their benefits are many but they are increasingly proving to be socially disruptive in nature. Technoethics as a field of enquiry emerged in an attempt to address ethical issues arising at the interface of these complex interconnections between humans, society and technology. However, the questions pertaining to ethics have remained heavily focused on 'responsible use' of technology, leaving the discourse on 'responsible design' and methodology behind. Further, the question of what is 'responsible use' itself underscores an inevitable and correlated presence of the (responsible) "user". So, what is it that makes one a 'user'? What is the ontology of the "user"? And, is there a default presumption about a 'universal user' at work in such a framing? The construction, analysis and understanding of 'user' is critical to answering questions on design ethics of these technologies. These questions not only connect with the epistemic status of the 'user' but also with the value-laden process of deciding who these users are. Against this backdrop and questions of user diversity, context sensitivity becomes an imminent imperative to address, in order to keep the discourse from lapsing into abstraction. For instance, speaking from the Indian context, most designs are centred around a typology, that is of the urban, male, educated, middle-class, neurotypical, able-bodied individual. The question arises that can a technology designed to cater to a stereotype (of a user) serve the needs of a real, situated user in a different context, say, a woman farmer situated in a remote village in Arunachal Pradesh, as against a male corporate employee in a tech company in Bengaluru? In order to address this imperative; scholars have advocated for an intercultural framework of technoethics. These different versions of pluralism -- such as: modus vivendi pluralism, liberal pluralism and pro hen interpretive pluralism enable us to secure irreducible differences between different cultures, but at the cost of assuming a priori assumptions about shared norms, standards, and principles etc. We assert that every apriori presumption is necessarily grounded in a plethora of metaphysical assumptions. This preoccupation with some or other kind of metaphysical assumption invariably leads to adoption of logocentrism marked by dichotomous thinking.

As an answer to this dilemma, this paper forwards the framework of Samvād. In the Indian philosophical tradition, building Samvāda ('sam' = equal + 'vāda' = dialogue) between one's own position and that of the 'other' (known as pūrvapaksa), before reaching any conclusion, has been one of the most fundamental styles of philosophising. As per Vātsyāyana's Nyāyabhāṣya, the Nyāya system follows a three-fold procedure of – enumeration (uddēsa), definition (lakṣaṇa) and examination (parīkṣā). Herein, 'enumeration' means the act of referring to an object by its name, 'definition' denotes any characteristics of the said object which distinguish it from all other objects and 'examination' involves verifying the distinguishing feature with the help of pramāṇās (source of knowledge). Samvāda is essentially an intellectual device and framework which is rule-governed and makes use of the various tools from (Nyāya) logic to resolve not only complex philosophical problems but also our day-to-day predicaments. It can be differentiated from Levinas's dialogical method and dialogical method of parrhesia on various grounds. We try to establish Samvād as both a concept/schema, as well as, praxis, for resolving ethical gaps and knots of

technoethics.

We elucidate the workings of Samvād through the two following case studies on social media and Machine Learning respectively. Most of the technoethics enquiries on social media grapple with “netiquettes” or regulation and governance. But we find that there are deeper questions which need our immediate attention, especially those on ontology and language. Ontology, language and ethics are interconnected and one cannot be talked of without the other. We specifically explore and address the ethical challenges posed by new digital technologies of - social media and machine learning. In case of social media, we note that technoethics has no clear answers about regulation and governance of the social media platform. When we delve into the question of netiquette, community standards and regulation - we find that Samvād is amiss. In the second case study, pertaining to Machine Learning, we find that interpretability/transparency, which could have served as a foundation to Samvād, is rampantly sacrificed in favour of functionality, usability, effectiveness, and profit motives because that is what the machinery of the technology industry and other dominant interests favour.

To sum up, in this paper we explore how we could reconstruct the method of Samvād and reconceptualise it as praxis, in order to find answers to the above stated ethical questions and technological discontents.

**Aisha Aijaz, Omkar Chattar**

### **Tug of War: The Ethical Tension Between Transparency and Opacity in Affective Computing**

The classical opacity-transparency relationship is where humans operate under a veil of opacity to use technology for various purposes, presupposing its transparency. However, with the advent of Affective Computing (AC), this relationship has started to reverse. AC is the study of computers that can sense, recognize, influence, or respond to human emotions. It operates under the assumption that human emotions are recordable and computable. In this paper, we explore the ethics of AC through an opacity-transparency relationship. We argue that human-machine interactions are ethically better understood through the lens of opacity-transparency, whereby humans have the right to maintain opacity and demand correlative transparency from the machine. AC reverses this relationship by revealing human emotions, which constitute the core of human identity and are responsible for moral decisions and judgments. This paper explores the consequences of this reversal by first discussing the opacity-transparency relationship, followed by the ethical concerns raised by its reversal. Although this reversal harbors several benefits in terms of enhanced capacities and function for vulnerable groups, it raises several epistemic and autonomy-related concerns, including privacy infringement, deception, manipulation, misunderstanding, misrepresentation, and compromised testimony. Furthermore, it has distributive consequences that expose vulnerable groups to unjustified burdens and reduce them to mere profiles. Finally, we foresee and address four possible objections to our claims. These include the beneficence of AC, consent of the user, the extent of capturing one’s affects, and convenience. Through these arguments, the paper aims to bring attention to the gravity of the ethical concerns raised by the reversal of the classical opacity-transparency relationship between man and machine for researchers in the field that may deploy AC systems for social good.

**Nivedita Tuli, Azam Danish**

**Natures, Creatures and Activisms on Instagram: Tracing the Virtual Trajectories of Three Environmental Protests in India**

In this paper we explore environmental activism on Instagram using three case-studies from India. The first was the death of a pregnant elephant in Kerala by ingesting crackers meant to deter boars from crop raiding. The second was an oil spill in Baghjan, an ecologically fragile region in Assam. The third case is of the protests against construction of a metro-car shed in the Aarey urban forest in Mumbai. Through content analysis of “Top” posts for the most popular hashtags, we thematically classified the representations of nature and creatures constructed through Instagram visuals, and identified overlaps and contradictions. We noted that images of non-human suffering play an important role in fuelling protests. Susan Sontag (2003) has noted that people are inordinately captivated by images of bodies in pain, while Sontag’s framework is limited to human pain, we argue that the same haunting memorability extends to images of non-human suffering. This paper also delves beyond the most painful and impactful visuals to explore why certain creatures and voices are highlighted on Instagram while others are absent. Which narratives do these protests carry, whose purpose do they serve, and in what ways do they imagine environmental justice?

**Nilanjana Bhattacharya, Mohammad Shad Ahmad**

**The Death-Event: Online Funerals, Disembodiment, And The Changing Understanding Of Death In The Covid-19 Pandemic**

This paper wishes to explore the radical shift in experiencing the death of oneself and others in a precarious situation of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has enframed death within biological and technological dispositions. The pandemic earmarks a shift in the way we experience, think, and perceive in our traditional and contemporary articulations about the phenomenality of death in our daily lives. With mass deaths and technological means of encountering the deceased like online funerals, death is no more an authentic encounter of beings, but is rather enframed by different social and political complexes that deny human beings their authentic existence. For this, we will take up the issue of online funerals and their increasing popularity in times of pandemic that marks a radical departure from the embodied practices of commemorating and preserving the dead, that in turn, reshapes the ways in which we experience the phenomenality of the death of the others. Technological disembodiment also disrupts the cultural and familiar emotive expressions of grief and touch that living express to bridge an ethical relation with the deceased. In exploring such questions, this paper wishes to address how the understanding of death is changed with various forms of disembodiments in the pandemic.

**Shabana M**

**Digital World and Changing Agencies: An Emerging Political Muslim women identity in Kerala Public Sphere**

The social and cultural structures have changed with the advent of the Internet thus the very concept of what is public is been changing, consequently public sphere too. Nancy Fraser argues that the public sphere got changed not because the public got diversified, rather the absence of dialogic equality and the scattering of the idea “public goodness” amidst the emergence of different existence with different identities and demand a multiple public sphere. (Fraser, 1992, p.128) The Public sphere where Cultural media such as film, television, literature, etc. have created an audience whose imagination is instilled with the

dominant cultural ideologies over the years, now the new media makes possible for everyone to make their own assertions individually or collectively where irrespective of gender, race, community and religion come to the vanguard. As the concept of media has been renewed with the advent of technology, the public sphere as a whole with its actors, participants and content has been transformed by new forms of communication and recodifies traditional solidarity. The paper is an attempt to look at how Muslim women of Kerala are creating new Islamic feminism in cyber space by analysing the Facebook page of Haritha Kerala State and GIO (Girl's Islamic Organization) Kerala in order to understand how the sectarian ideologies draw different understandings on the subject Muslim women drawing a critical study of the contemporary political Muslim discourse of Kerala.

### **Divya Patnaik**

#### **Understanding Algorithms from a Feminist Lens**

Technology, and overall the discipline of science, has always been considered as a “neutral” subject and entity, devoid of values and impervious to bias and discrimination. Therefore, it has often eluded from the purview of a critical social science approach. However, in the last decade, technology has advanced and developed at an accelerated pace, and subsequently has managed to establish itself at the centre of all social, economic, and political interaction. The reliance on technology further increased with the COVID-19 Pandemic, where even the most basic forms of interaction moved online. This shift was significant as well as momentous, given that there was a recognition that not only was technology a part of society, but also that society was embedded in technology. Using this as a point of analysis, this paper attempts to look at technology, specifically focusing on algorithms, and tries to understand the role bias plays, from its structure to its impact. In particular this paper takes a feminist standpoint, and critically examines how as a whole the structure of technology is biased against women, and how algorithms play a role. Therefore, when we envision a “feminist internet,” what that would entail, and how can we create “feminist algorithms” are some of the questions the paper strives to answer.

### **Shobha Elizabeth John**

#### **Navigating Networks of Dissent, Surveillance and/on Social Media**

This paper aims to critically analyze the limitations and possibilities of online dissent by focusing on social media as a disruptive space. It will delve into how active social media participation is embedded within larger schemas of multilayered surveillance and algorithmic datasets. Social media is a platform par excellence to voice discontent, disseminate information, and mobilize the masses owing to its versatility and expansive interactivity. But it is also a non-neutral technopolitical system entrenched in the rationale of market forces, sustaining itself by commodifying user data and monetizing their activities through surveillance. I suggest that social media exemplifies the Deleuzian society of control wherein forms of domination are extremely diffused and insidious with individuals being entangled in complex networks that dictate the contours of their existence but which they cannot fully apprehend. Can the vastly complex potentialities of social media play a decisive role in initiating systemic change? Or does it champion what Herbert Marcuse considered the advanced industrial society's ability to contain qualitative social change by assimilating opposition into preexisting frameworks? This paper will grapple with these questions about digital dissent and its entanglement with larger questions of power, performativity, and surveillance in contemporary times.

## **Sunanda Kar**

### **Techno Digital Engagements: Is there a disruption in the Humanities?**

Internet and new media technologies have been fostering a digital culture which invokes human participation and engagement with techno-digital infrastructures. One aspect of this emerging technophilia, at least in India, is the prominence of the field of Digital Humanities, which is stimulating digital endeavours across academia, precisely in the humanities.

## **Ayesha K**

### **Politics of AI**

This paper attempts to sketch the trajectory of disruptive technologies from two separate time periods and the discontents they produced with the aim to draw out parallels between them and show how the one laid the foundation for the intrinsic inequalities that exist today while the other would further entrench these inequalities if implemented in the existing system because it would be operating in the same inherently flawed structure. The technological advancements that ushered in the Industrial Revolution also turned people into a commodity that were forced not only to sell their labor power on the market but forced to do so every day for the very fundamental purpose of survival. The repercussions this has had for society in general and specifically for the weaker demographic where capitalism has used patriarchy among others to further its causes, and also for the world, through imperialist expansion cannot be understated. A disruptive technology like Artificial Intelligence when implemented in this system would by default perpetuate the very biases that AI claims to conquer. Hyper surveillance, gendered violence, reduction of workers to an even more dispensable commodity are some. In AI, these would also be exponentially more difficult to spot and to overcome.

## **Sadam Hussain Shah**

### **Social media and construction of political publics**

Media converge, reproduce, and become a part of the sociocultural habitus that we reference in defining ourselves as our experiences become increasingly partially or entirely mediated. In other words, we live with social media, and some argue, in social media that support ever-changing individual and collective identities. Because social media helps us tell stories about ourselves, others, and the world we live in, the more interesting questions are about determining which stories are being told and how, as well as which stories are being hidden. Importantly, how might this affective investment envelop and drive movements forward if these stories connect people in ways that make them feel like their opinions matter? The norms that allow and constrain how individuals occupy the same space while espousing compatible and opposing ideas, co-creating meanings, and enacting processes that lead to similar and divergent goals are at the heart of the issue. These are very human conditions. These are very human conditions. As a result, the future of social media in terms of fostering or inhibiting collaboration is no better or worse than that of any other mode of interaction that humans have devised. This paper aims to study the role of social media in the construction of political publics. It aims to study the issues of power/knowledge in the mediated spaces. How events enter public space and how claims to truth and truth construction are made