

# UNIT-4

# CITIZEN JOURNALISM



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**Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, indeed, it's the only thing that ever has-Margaret Mead**

## DEFINITIONS-

“citizen journalism, journalism that is conducted by people who are not professional journalists but who disseminate information using Web sites, blogs, and social media.”

“the collection, dissemination, and analysis of news and information by the general public, especially by means of the internet”.

- At a time when the main stream media is seen diverting from its objective and focusing more on profit making motive many social and vital issues and stories relating to the masses are either neglected or rejected by the media that has led to a huge gap between issues reported and neglected. With an aim to bridge this gap a new concept and trend of participatory journalism has slowly but steadily emerged across the globe known as public or participatory journalism popularly known as **“Citizen Journalism”**.



- A form of journalism when any common man in his capacity as a citizen of a nation take up an initiative to express ideas irrespective of their educational or professional background, it is an act of citizens playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating.
- Empowerment with information is a crucial tenet of citizen journalism in India, a democracy with over one billion people thus the objective of this participation is to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging, and relevant information that is vital for a democratic country like India. Citizen Journalism has slowly but steadily revolutionized the entire media in the country; it is influencing and making an impact in mainstream media henceforth become a powerful tool for every citizen to report the news that touches their lives.

The concept of citizen journalism became a powerful tool and a reality mainly due to two reasons

- firstly the Right to Information Act 2005, proved to be a Source for information.
- Secondly the technology empowered every citizen to be informed and updated through social Media, internet and mobile technology.

Thus Citizen Journalism become a phenomena explored via new media and technology that facilitated the reach to a large number of audiences with or without the support of mainstream media. With the popularity of Citizen Journalism no longer in question, even the national media around the world are sourcing leads from stories and pictures filed by Citizen Journalists.

## Citizen Journalists Raise Their Voice to Bring in Change in the Law and Perception of People

India in general and Delhi specially has recorded many incidents of crimes, atrocities and violence against women. According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data – 572 rapes were reported in 2011, the number rose to over 800 in 2012 highest in the last 10 years making it India's "rape capital".

But for the first time in the history of India the power of citizens through social media was seen and the impact was tremendous during the **Delhi Gang Rape** - that involved a rape and murder of young 23-year-old female physiotherapy intern who was beaten and gang raped in a bus in which she was travelling with her male companion on December 16, 2012 in New Delhi. The young girl died from her injuries thirteen days later while undergoing emergency treatment in Singapore.

The media called the young victim as **Nirbhaya** - a brave heart.

Nirbhaya's case was able to cut deep into the hearts of people irrespective of their caste, creed, religion or age, the incident made the general public's collective anger to explode and come out on streets. If not for collective efforts of the people, Nirbhaya incident would have been another case of violence in the capital city, it would just be another girl, another daughter, another child who was another victim in a society that didn't see rape as a crime, but just a common act, although the public would be outraged and angered by the violence against another young victim, nothing would change.

The United Nations Human rights chief calls rapes in India a "national problem" it is a social stigma in India for the women to go to the Police station and report rape or any other kind of violence unfortunately the result of which is that only one in three cases are reported and ends in a conviction. It was a people's movement and it was the conscience of the people that made them come out and demand justice for Nirbhaya.

For the first time in the history of India many citizens come forward to report the events as Citizen Journalists they were actively posting photographs and videos online and the main stream media was taking **user generated content**. The young technology savvy Indians spread its national outrage across the country and united together to voice their opinions against the weak law and flaws in our legal system within days it became a place for social change in India.

### SOME OTHER CASES-

1. Unnao (U.P) case
2. Hathras Gang Rape Case
3. Kathua case
4. Hyderabad Rape Case
5. Himachal Pradesh Gudiya Case
6. Jisha Rape Case (Ernakulam, Kerala)
7. Badaun Rape Case

\* Identify more examples of Citizen Journalism

## **A New Trend - Platform for Citizen Journalism**

The Nirbhaya news caught the attention of the entire main stream media but a new trend was witnessed and the power of Citizens through Citizen Journalism was actively playing a role. There was also a plethora of citizens on the ground reporting the developments as it happened and reported in Social Media and posted their videos and comments on twitter, the main stream added a section in their news bulletin and programs as “Citizen news & Views” and the comments on Twitter, you tube videos and so on. The Delhi gang rape demonstrated how citizen journalism has really come to the fore. Change.org, an online petition “Stop Rape Now” was initiated by former Journalist Namita Bhandare seeking the intervention of President Pranab Mukherjee and Chief Justice of India.



Today there are many channels having exclusive programs featuring reports and stories filed by Citizens called “Citizen Journalists” aims at encouraging and creating a formal platform for Citizen Journalists like the popular show on TV channels like **ibnlive** and **Headlines today** that telecast - **CJ Show** and **Right to be heard (RTH)** on weekly basis and has gained popularity over a period of time. In addition to TV channels we have various websites like the Citizen Media Network an open forum, platform to nurture and promote Citizen Journalism from all walks of life to express themselves through new media tools and get trained in digital journalism methods and techniques.

Popular websites like [merinews.com](http://merinews.com), [www.reportindia.com](http://www.reportindia.com), [www.indiaonline.in](http://www.indiaonline.in), [www.indiaonline.in/cj](http://www.indiaonline.in/cj), [www.mynews.in](http://www.mynews.in) and many more websites giving a platform for Citizen Journalists in India and South Asia.

## Conclusion

In Nirbhaya's case, the public sentiment was heard; action was finally taken. It facilitated Indians to come together and mobilize for change. Today there is lot of awareness in Delhi, authorities are more active and alert and forthcoming in tackling and providing security to young girls and women.

The Indian government decided to review its policies on rape and other crimes of violence against women and brought in new stringent laws in the country to ensure safety and protection to women. Finally, on February 3rd, 2013, President Pranab Murherjee passed the Criminal Law Ordinance, which provides for death penalty in case of any rape in India.

## Advantages Of Citizen Journalism:-

### 1. It Gives An Opportunity To Cover All Sides Of The Story-

There are occasions when stories need more details to it, and since people are more involved and concerned nowadays, they have means to confirm, correct, and add information about the news from the mainstream media as there are instances when they would only focus on one part of the story, leaving other important and relevant information.

### 2. It Gives Opportunity To Local Communities And Ordinary People-

News from a local or small town can now be known to all people around the world since citizen journalism is accessible to all. It gives power to ordinary people to state facts which can sometimes lack the mainstream media.

### 3. It Focuses On Small But Real Challenges-

The mainstream media would only cover general or big stories. However, with citizen journalism people from all walks of life get the chance to show problems that are happening but people don't notice because no one lets them know. A great example of this is asking help for less fortunate citizens. It is less likely that their stories would be heard in the news, but through citizen journalism, concerned individuals get the chance to seek the help of other people who would gladly help if they only know.

# Disadvantages Of Citizen Journalism:

## 1. It Confuses People Whether To Believe Or Not

People know that traditional journalism follows a particular protocol or rules before they report something. For this reason, it is easier to believe it than citizen journalism. Nowadays, everyone can write or show whatever he or she wants on the internet, and it is up to the audience to believe it or not. It creates confusion as people are not sure when the truth is a lie and vice versa.

## 2. It Has a Small Audience

Citizen journalism is usually through social media, and millions of people are on it. However, how do you reach those who are not? There are places in the world where people don't seem to give much attention to social media that's why it is impossible for them to have access to the news, report, or blog.

## 3. It Can Be Subjective-

One's thought, and beliefs may influence citizen journalism. It could be more of an opinion rather than a fact. Many people are fanatics and theorists that they sound convincing when they tell a story. It is challenging to determine which information is real and which are pure speculations.



THANK YOU