

### Fake News: Credibility, Cultivation Syndrome and the New Age Media

Bharali, Bharati; Goswami, Anupa Lahkar

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Bharali, B., & Goswami, A. L. (2018). Fake News: Credibility, Cultivation Syndrome and the New Age Media. *Media Watch*, 9(1), 118-130. <https://doi.org/10.15655/mw/2018/v9i1/49277>

#### Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer CC BY-NC-ND Lizenz (Namensnennung-Nicht-kommerziell-Keine Bearbeitung) zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu den CC-Lizenzen finden Sie hier:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/deed.de>

#### Terms of use:

This document is made available under a CC BY-NC-ND Licence (Attribution-Non Commercial-NoDerivatives). For more information see:

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0>

## **Fake News: Credibility, Cultivation Syndrome and the New Age Media**

BHARATI BHARALI & ANUPA LAHKAR GOSWAMI  
Gauhati University, India

Fake news and its repercussions are now a global concern, especially in the wake of the recent incidents that have shook the credibility of media, be it regional, national or global. Media is now a web of propagandas and there are more views than news. Three stories (Myanmar coup, Dimapur Lynching, and Grenfell Tower fire) were taken as case study to understand the morphology of fake news. These news stories have been representative of the news globally, nationally as well as regionally but nevertheless bearing a powerful impact in the news scenario. All the stories have one thing in common primarily designed to suit agenda setting and framing theory, to suit the agendas of political interest as well as cultivate ideas in the minds of the people. Deducing from the analysis, the paper suggests media filtering for restoring credibility, accountability and authenticity of journalism. The paper also framed onion layer trapping that could be a plausible source of fake news.

Keywords: Credibility, concocted news, new age media, framing, perception

Fake news and its repercussions are now a global concern, especially in the wake of the recent incidents that have shook the credibility of media be it regional, national or global. Although, no clear, consistent and concrete definition exists for fake news, attempts have been made by theorists to define the fake news syndrome. We call it as syndrome, as fake news has certain associated characteristics like short life span of fake news creator, relatively faster as well as higher 'share' and 'clicks' on social media, "fake news about fake news" (Frank, 2015) etc. which are inseparable to its characteristic nature. Fake news can be classified as intentionally and verifiably false which could mislead readers. They are intentionally fabricated to persuade audience (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017, p. 213). Renee Hobbs, classifies fake news into six categories, like (i) disinformation, (ii) propaganda, (iii) hoaxes, (iv) satire/parody, (v) inaccuracies in journalism and (vi) partisanship (Media Education Lab, 2017). Fake news may be professional, profit-driven forms and non-commercial, activist-oriented practitioners (Reilly, 2010). John Pantalone, while differentiating fake news and false news, states that fake news is a deliberate effort to mislead readers while false news could be note designed with that motive (Perreault, 2017). Fake news is thus, 'intentionally false' in nature (Frank, 2015, p. 316).

Mixed arguments rule the academic scenario of media studies regarding fake news, its causes and impact. According to Frank, fake news grabs more attention due to the reasons (i) computer as an indelible medium of our lives, (ii) sometimes play forms in

---

Correspondence to: Dr. Bharati Bharali, Department of Communication and Journalism, Gauhati University, Guwahati-781 014, Assam, India. Email: [bharatibharali@gauhati.ac.in](mailto:bharatibharali@gauhati.ac.in)

computers take the form of fake news: hence, creating a complex relationship with the news and the viewers' expectations. He further categorized the hoax creators into several tricky groups like:

Generators: Sites that provide fake news generation easier for personal use.

Cloners: Sites that emulate home page of a legitimate news organization and launch hoax.

Wishful thinkers: Sites taking a satirical dig at real life events for inspiring political action.

Citizen satirists: Sites that offer satire for satire's sake – and clearly identify themselves as such.

Legitimate sites: Ones that unintentionally provide a platform for hoaxers. (317-318)

Allcott and Gentzkow state that fake news are in spur, because of the fastest nature of content spreading in social media and is mostly credited for lack of significant third party filtering, fact-checking, or editorial judgments in social media (211). The intensity of the popularity of fake news is such that, "an individual user with no track record or reputation can in some cases reach as many readers as Fox News, CNN, or the New York Times" (211). They further identify that smoothness in webpage creation has reduced the barrier of entering into the news industry, leading to higher stakes of fake content generation. Secondly, rise of social media users, basically Facebook and micro bloggers, is another scope for higher fake news flaws. Declining trust and confidence on mass media and rise of political polarizations are other two significant causes of the rise of fake news (214-215).

According to the News Media Association of UK, fake news sites are not staffed by journalists but by individuals who see a commercial, political or other opportunity in gaming the algorithms Facebook, Google and other networks and platforms use to connect their users with news stories and such news spread fast in social media (News Media Association, 2017). Centre for the Study of Media, Communication and Power, King's College London's submission to Consultation on Fake News has interesting observations in their report. It states, "The production of fake news – for political or financial gain, or for drama or satire – is centuries old. The difference between this and the current phenomenon of fake news is chiefly with respect to its extent, its dissemination, and its effects" (Moore, 2016, p. 5).

From the "Great Moon Hoax" of 1835 in the New York Times, fake news continues to be a part of news industry. Of late, the 2016 US Presidential Election and Brexit issue in UK has made once cornered and neglected area of journalism into a much talked and debated topic of recent times. In the Indian context, a recent story about Kerala's Kasargod district where purportedly Islamic State was enticing young Indians with money had raised security alarms. The news item is about huge sum of money being paid to IS recruits to convert Hindu and Sikh girls to Islam. Allegedly, the rates for converting a Hindu Brahmin girl is rupees 5 lakh, rupees 7 lakh for a Sikh Punjabi girl and rupees 4.5 lakh for a Hindu Kshatriya girl. The basis of the 'rate card' was a fake WhatsApp message that went with a long trail (George and Raja, 2017). Alarmingly, the news item was picked up and broadcasted by a leading national English news channel in June 2017. Similar stories had erupted over trafficking misinformation in Jharkhand, where a suspect was lynched to death or the mob lynching case of Dimapur. The trend of fake news generation has taken the global media scenario by storm as there involves a lot of effort to distinguish a fake news from a genuine one (Metro, 2017).

In this submission, we attempt to comprehend fake news syndrome by analysing three recent news stories– the covert operation by Indian Army in Myanmar, Mob lynching in Dimapur in Nagaland and Grenfell Tower incident in UK. The paper examines the underlying

strategy of framing and reframing of news construction. The study is significant as it tries to give new insights to the thought of fake news from narrative perspective rather than answering the chronology of fake news and impacts in detail.

## **Statement of the Problem**

There has been a trend towards dwindling confidence in the mainstream media, sometimes due to propaganda-laced stories, which occupy a large portion of its content. According to Gallup polls, only 40 per cent of Americans trust their mass media sources as “fully, accurately and fairly” (Riffkin, 2015). A similar survey in the UK has shown that the most read newspapers were also the least-trusted at times (Reilly & Nye, 2012). This kind of study predicts that the generation has shifted from conventional mainstream media to social media, which includes blogs and other social media content, as a means to escape the perceived bias and unreliability of mainstream news (Tsfati, 2010) for quick and easy information services. This has become a global phenomenon now. In a study on youth political opinions and attitudes, Baumgartner and Morris (2006; see also Morris, 2009) found that college students exposed to “The Daily Show” by Stephen Colbert in Comedy Central reported more negative views of particular political candidates and the electoral system than others. A growing body of research indicates that this can influence audience members’ knowledge, opinions, and beliefs. It was also easier now to determine how digital platforms, including news websites or social media sites to personal blogs, make it possible for people to express their likability or opinions on a particular story. These transitions have further reinforced participatory journalism, that banks on collaborative or collective nature of news production facilitated by users’ active engagement with news through comment sections, discussion forums, recommendation systems, social media, and personal blogs (Singer et al., 2011). The significance of the issue thus lies in the perception and motives which are two major factors used for deliberate framing and propaganda where audience feedback also affects news selection. This paper attempts at bringing out the plausible cause and effect of fake news generation along with its possible effects.

Audience are always vulnerable to the media effect if embraced by issues. Feedback also work as affect factor on audience mind, that triggers the cascade affect for rating an event with higher comments and trend to follow the high rated posts. Studies have categorically defined three facets of news production inspired by audience feedback online: topic selection, story placement, and performance. Quite interestingly people mindlessly choose what seems to be popular among others (Sundar, 2008) or sometimes see their vested interest in a particular content. Audience feedback also influences readers’ interpretation about media influence and sometimes counter arguments reposition news story’s degree of influence (Lee & Jang, 2009), triggering readers who are high in need for cognition and derive satisfaction from user disapproval ratings (vs. no ratings). This perceived influence of a news story on public opinion (Lee & Jang Westwood, 2014) is devoid of information.

## **Literature Review**

What is fake news? This is one of the highest available queries in the Internet by academicians, journalists and thinkers of ‘post-truth’ period. There are reports that try to define fake news, its consequences and responses of concerned media organizations in European countries (News Media Association, 2015; Moore, 2016). Other time, conscious

people are organizing round table discussions on unearthing the truth, when barraged with fake news (Perreault, 2017).

Allcott and Gentzkow while discussing the role of social media and fake news, elaborately focus on the pros and cons associated with the US Presidential Election, 2016. The paper is important as it draws definition of fake news, sketches out models on the US Election and leaves out news identified as fake news sites along with the association of those who becomes the arbiter of truth (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017, p. 211-236). In an interesting effort, Russell Frank considers certain kinds of fake news as a genre of digital folklore and attempts to sort out the differences among fake news: hoaxes, pranks, satires and parodies. It offers examples of each and every news story and shows how fake news functions as folk political commentary or folk media criticism (Frank, 2015, p. 315-332). Frank is worried for “fake news about fake news”, which are more dangerous tradition of our time. Manny Cohen talks about what happens when the truth can be changed. He also discusses industry requirements around the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) and how Artificial intelligence is needed to guide the industries’ future and the search for the truth (Cohen, 2017).

Fake news, of late challenges existing journalism pedagogy and created a tussle between re-establishing credibility, truth and perception of students, and then, with the community (Richardson, 2017). India too is a prey to this syndrome and need to articulate a comprehensive framework that assimilates concerted verification practices and re-engaging with the audience to address the post-truth politics in the country (Bhaskaran, Mishra, & Nair, 2017, pp. 41-50). That fake news has legal risks must be spread among the students so that it might act as deterrent against this illicit practice alongside media education (Pearson, 2017). Momchil Hardalov et al. brings hope for students in distinguishing credible news from fake news when they derive an accuracy model with linguistic (n-gram), credibility-related (capitalization, punctuation, pronoun use, sentiment polarity), and semantic (embedding’s and DBPedia data) features.

Again sometimes people find the element of identification in the stories of the media elites and this also could be a plausible results of fake news states Polletta and Callahan (2017) who also believe that the rise of right-wing media outlets and the excess of user-shared digital news are responsible for the fake news generation and storytelling approach in the Post Trump era (Polletta & Callahan, 2017).

Centre for Media and Democracy, a NGO of USA, in 2006 reports how 77 news channels of the country broadcasted fake video news releases (Farsetta & Price, 2006). This report is significant as videos are strong enough to persuade people faster than its print counterpart. Saez-Trumper (2014) presents a web application named Fake Tweet Buster (FTB), that identifies tweets with fake images and users on Twitter. To do that the researcher applies three techniques: (i) reverse image searching, (ii) user analysis and (iii) a crowd sourcing approach to detect that kind of malicious users on Twitter.

*Literature Gap and Significance of the Study:* From the survey of existing literature, we found that there are various approaches to studying fake news: (i) classification of fake news, (ii) fake news and video content, (iii) U.S Election and fake news (iv) technologies curbing for fake news satirical (v) fake news and significance of rise of ‘fifth state’, and (vi) the real consequences of fake news. All these papers cynosure fake news from international perspective. We could not trace out work related to the discourse analysis of fake news, its construction and after effect. This study is significant, as there will be discussions on news framing, content analysis of a few cases and its likely effects on news credentials. The paper also enkindles to inculcate questions about the future of the news industry. It

also raises questions whether the news industry needs regulatory filters or not. The objectives of this study are to understand (i) How the texts are framed and deframed in fake news, (ii) The effects aftermath, if any and (iii) Future of news flow mechanism

## Research Questions and Methods

As the study aims on understanding the credibility, cultivation, concocted news stories, and the new age media behaviour, the research questions are set on-

RQ1: Does media depict indiscreet behaviour in terms of portraying credibility, reliability and practicality?

RQ2: Does the fake news 'syndrome' indicate the need for monitoring news flow mechanism, regardless of the medium?

The paper explores the phenomena of fake news through discourse analysis. Content analysis of news has been done for better understanding of the framing and deframing of fake news. These stories could be represented through the agenda setting and framing theory where the content are designed to suit the agendas of political parties as well as cultivate ideas in the minds of the people.

## Analysis

### Case I: Myanmar Coup: Differentiating Between the Facts and Fabrication

The Myanmar covert story is a fine example of distortion of facts by media and the difficulties in analysing the reality in media. Some can even interpret the situation as exercise of embedded journalism but what was important is the way people interpreted the information, sometimes due to the lack of media literacy.

The researchers have chosen particularly this story, since these touches upon issues of national security and trust and also can be classified between embedded journalism or parachute journalism, which is a key element of news creation. The content of the story significantly affects the opinion of the people and questions the legitimacy of media information and how significant is media literacy in terms of information absorption.

The story states that, National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang), was responsible for killing of 18 soldiers of the 6 Dogra unit of the Indian Army on June 4, 2015. As an act of retaliation, against the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang) attack, 21 Para (Special Forces) of the Indian Army conducted a cross-border revenge attack in Myanmar killing over a 100 militants.

While Indian officials claimed that the separatist rebel's sought refuge in the densely forested border of Myanmar, there has been no official comment on the raid and the Myanmar Government later denied giving access to the Indian army.

A number of articles both national and international emerged analysing the incident, some claiming that the coup was a victorious attempt of the Indian Army while others claimed the whole story was a classic example of embedded journalism and false news. However, a series of follow up stories rattled the conviction that the first few stories planted in the minds of the average readers or viewers. What looked like a major military advancement in flushing out three hardened military camps in Myanmar and killing scores of militants in the process appeared highly distorted and manufactured with on the ground reporting of the incident proving to be otherwise. This in turn led to cross verification of

facts and questioning the variation in the circumstances as covered by various journalists. This eventually led to a shift in the mindset questioning whether this was embedded journalism that was in practice.

## Discussion

*Dramatic Narrative:* All news are not fake news. Only those, which have potentiality for attracting audience quickly and can possibly generate high rating points, are counted for fake news by the shadow creators. Sometime, knowingly or unknowingly, an established institution also publishes news that later many of them withdraw the same after being found it as 'fake'. Many organizations also take action against the journalists (e.g. Reuter) as a penalty. But question remains about the effect that particular fake news have on the society. Sometimes it may become life threatening too (e.g. Dimapur Lynching incident as mentioned above). Despite being extremely different from each other in terms of content and the element of national interest, both the stories of Dimapur Lynching and Myanmar coup can be connected to the element of trust that media is entrusted with and how that can be severely affect both nationalist feelings (as in case of the Myanmar Coup) or heighten narrow regionalism threatening peace and security (as in case of the Dimapur Lynching).

In this study, we observed that narratives in fake news are in most of the time vivid and the description is elaborative in nature. Graphical representation adds flavour to the fake content and help in making it more appealing, reliable and seems to be 'accurate'. Historical backdrops, if included, make fake news more authentic and look real leaving audience into confusion.

*Aggressive Narrative:* In the Myanmar Coup case, the first few stories that appeared on the media were very straightforward and had reported the event exactly as it was delivered by the army officers. For instance the story 'Myanmar Covert Operation: The Inside Story of the Surgical Strike' covered by the NDTV came out aggressively about the military flush out that was carried out bravely in foreign land. It stated,

'The two camps are estimated to have had a total of about 150 militants and both were liquidated. Casualties have been pegged at least 50, but could be much higher, even as much as 100 or more, said sources. Some militants may have escaped, but most were killed, they said (Dutt & Sen, 2015).

*Elaborate Description and Visual:* Another story by the Indian Express titled "How MEA helped Army set stage for strike in Myanmar" (Swami, 2015 <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/cross-border-operations-how-mea-helped-set-stage-for-strike/>: June 11, 2015), describes in details the entire episode with graphic representation of the entire scene that was in progress.

"Raid came after a decade-long programme (Inclusion of Historical Backdrops) of secret diplomacy reaching out to Myanmar's Army. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) played a critical role in setting the stage for Tuesday's cross-border strikes deep inside Myanmar by securing permission, highly" (Swami, 2015).

A slightly exaggerated story with headlines spelling, 'Inside story: Over 100 northeast militants may have been killed in Army's Myanmar operations' appeared in The Times of India declared the announcements of the government of India stating,

"The daring raid, which saw commandos crawling hundreds of meters to raid the camps (detail description), marked the unveiling of India's new response to unconventional threats irrespective of where they come from. This was the first declared instance of the use of the doctrine of pre-emption: a principle that the US invokes to disregard constraints of national borders to nip threats." These write up, no doubt, increase the adrenalin of readers to follow the news story passionately (Jain, 2015).

*Baffled Audience:* Following the news story for further detail, a reader gets confused with the news headlined as "Yes, no, maybe: Was the Indian Army's 9 June counter-insurgency operation actually carried out in Myanmar?"

The news item questioned the veracity of the facts and also the manipulation of information that were delivered to the general public in order to suit the vested interest of the information senders. This in turn created confusion among the information receivers. There it stated,

"The Economic Times reports that the 'cross-border strike' that dismantled insurgent camps never actually took place in Myanmar, adding that the gallantry award citations 'make no mention' of Myanmar and state that 'the operation took place in Manipur and Nagaland'. Sure enough, the Army issued a statement immediately after the 9 June operation saying, the Indian Army engaged two separate groups of insurgents along the Indo-Myanmar border at two locations, along the Nagaland and Manipur borders (emphasis added). In the aftermath of the operation, Union Minister Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore on June 10, 2015 in a press meet irked the government officials in Myanmar and back home in India. DNA had quoted Myanmar President's Office director U ZawHtay at the time, as referring to the raid that occurred" on Indian territory, near the border with Myanmar (FP staff, 2015).

Having raised the storm, a series of debates simultaneously rose questioning the facts and even the supposed gallantry that was showered on the military who had allegedly carried out the attack on the insurgency camps. The story by Parameswaram (2015), titled 'The Truth about India's Militant Strike in Myanmar: New Delhi's operation is much less novel or controversial than some have claimed' which states that the most frustrating thing about the operation was the little amount of information that has been confirmed even eliminating essential facts. Towards the end, the Myanmar government even denied that the operation even occurred on its side of the border despite India's assertion that it did. Even basic details, such as the time of the operation, the number of casualties that took place, the degree to which there was coordination with Myanmar among others remained unclear due to conflicting reports.

Bhattacharjee (2015) in his article published in the Huffington Post titled "Why We May Never Know The Whole Truth About Army's Myanmar Ops", contested on the numbers and facts of the conflict and states that it is often the truth that is the biggest casualty in a conflict.

While the various reports on the coup covered by both the print and television have varied differently in terms of the number of casualty that lay between 50 and 100 or the exact location of the conflict to be precise whether it was the border of Nagaland, Manipur or Myanmar itself, the media reports have been used accordingly by interest groups to applaud or criticize the current government military functionalities.



Having drawn significant conclusion from the stories published above, it is clear that manipulation of information is sometimes present in the administrative level itself. This calls for the need of media literacy and the enforcement of basic tenets while reporting. Also, the way in which a story can be used to fulfil a certain interest groups agendas are very dangerous for the interest of the gullible audiences of media.

### Case II: Dimapur Lynching: Fake news and Trial by Media

A mob lynching took place in Dimapur, Nagaland in India, on 5 March 2015 where a mob of about 7000–8000 people broke into a prison, dragged man arrested on suspicions of rape, out of the Dimapur Central Jail, stripped him and lynched him to death in a case of vigilante justice.

Though later after investigation, it was found to be a case of consensual sex between the accused and the victim with the woman allegedly demanding money from him, which when he refused, she complained to police about having been raped, stated the police later. The accused was also initially stated to be a Bangladeshi immigrant however posthumously it turned out that he was a 35-year-old used car businessman from Karimganj district of Assam, living in Nagaland for 8 years and was married to a Naga woman for 4 years having a three-year-old daughter.

In the entire incident social media played a dominant role in spreading grapevine communication and this led to one incident after the other bringing the mob on the streets.

This sensational news first appeared on social media, with provocative posts identifying the accused, Syed Sharif Khan, as an illegal Bangladeshi immigrant. Both the social media and initial reports by local dailies alleged that Khan was a Bangladeshi (Kashyap, 2015). This gross misrepresentation of facts led to a mobilization of the local Naga people, who later dragged out Syed Sharif Khan, from the police custody, lynched him to death and later hanged him in the public square, all in the presence of the authorities. This incident was gruesomely chronicled through social media updates by some people and followed religiously by another group.

Later however through reports it was found out, the rape wasn't real and that it was consensual sex between two adults which was misreported by the female due to some argument between the two. Also the Shaifuddin Khan was not a Bangladeshi national but a genuine Indian citizen belonging to the Karimganj district of Assam (Dutta, 2015). This case of trial by media and the apparent loss of media ethics by the print media without checking on to the veracity of the facts puts media on a bad light.

In global context similarities can be drawn regarding the Egyptian uprising of early 2011. The most successful social movements in Egypt included the Kefaya Youth, through social media networks brought together people who were affected, established bonds between activists, and globalized the opposition.

*Aggressive Narrative:* In Dimapur Lynching case, “wake up from slumber before they chase us out from our own homes” was the urge in social media. This emotional appeal worked like a miracle and became the mantra for the tragi-ironical incident ‘Dimapur lynching: a travesty of reporting,’ 2015. A study on four English newspaper of Nagaland on this case by Kumar (2015) states that “key online communities were banned after the lynching and their pages are no longer available on the internet. Others that were not banned seem to have cleaned up their pages. For instance, a day after the lynching, one of the Facebook communities posted a short article that was titled “The Invisible Hand that Killed the Rapist.”

The post, which was later deleted from the timeline along with at least three other posts, began with the following sentence: "I'm not at all ashamed of being a Naga for what has happened in Dimapur." (Dimapur lynching: a travesty of reporting, 2015). All four reported that he was an illegal Bangladeshi immigrant. So, there was no room for questioning the police for prematurely branding him as a Bangladeshi.

This indicates the framing of the news was deliberate which appears to have been driven by the propaganda of elimination of outsiders and create political bifurcation among communities leading to communal conflict. It is ironical that no investigative reports were even published in any of the newspapers including the editorials (Kumar, 2015). That the incident was based on fake news was also established, when Economic and Political Weekly (EPW) writes

Accused falsely of being an illegal Bangladesh immigrant, Khan was one of thousands of Bengali-speaking Muslims who have lived in Dimapur for decades.... (Laskar, 2015)

The write up clearly identifies him as Assamese businessman, Syed Sarif Uddin Khan, who lived in Dimapur for nearly two decades. Resulting from this, a 12 hour strike followed by *bandh* was held in Assam by the protesters which highlights the cross territorial effects of fake news. The effect can also be felt through the news published in The Hindu on March 8, 2015, which states,

The 12-hour general strike in Assam's Barak Valley affected the traffic in Manipur. Several trucks, buses and private and commercial vehicles could not reach Jiribam, the entry point of Manipur along NH 37 (Laithangbam, 2015)

### Case III: Fake Posts and Global Media Concern

The recent terrorist attack in Manchester where a suicide bomber killed 22 rock concert viewers at the Manchester Arena, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2017 and the devastating fire at the 24 storeyed Grenfell Tower that occurred on 14 June, 2017, killing 80 and injuring over 70 persons in the heart of London created global concerns on fake post. A series of posts on the lost people at the sight emerged in the social media. Some genuine and some fake. There were posts which were shared on social media like,

"My 22-year-old niece Jessie has become separated with her family in the #GrenfellTower fire. Please if you see her get in touch ASAP RT Pls" (Metro, 2017).

The post had gotten viral and there were concerns that were raised regarding the security of the person whose photo was concerned. However quite surprisingly it appeared that the photo they used was of a Mexican writer called Tamara De Anda. She posted a photo on her Instagram at 1.30 am from Mexico.

Another photo was being shared post the Grenfell tower fire, were an appeal was made claiming,

"Help my nephew is missing and was near there where the fire occurred help me to spread RT please #GrenfellTower #London I'm worried." (Metro, 2017)

However, the photo posted is of a Mexican YouTuber and social media celebrity, Pirata de Culiacan. Pirata posted a photo on his Instagram at 4.47 am GMT from Mexico, indicating that he wasn't in Grenfell Tower.

There were rumours about 92 people being killed in the fore while other sides solely operated to create fake emotional accounts of the stories of victims to get more likes and thereby increase the traffic of the webpage.

This is not a new case in terms of digital doctoring or photo manipulation in photo journalism. From the fake portrait of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 to Adnan Hajj – a renowned photographer of Reuters, who published disturbed photographs from Middle East in 2006 who was eventually suspended from the agency on accusation of publishing fake photography (Farid, 2006, p. 162) this phenomenon has been a common practice by many photo journalists. Photograph along with emotional texts are used in digital platform for personal use, financial assistance, deliberate public motivation and to involve audience emotionally with an incident.

Farid while discussing on 'Digital doctoring: How to tell the real from the fake' develops one model for detecting the fake from real. He further describes the components and procedures that are used for creating a false photograph. Cloning, lighting and re-touching are some of the techniques to detect tampering. But this is only possible for critics and experts! A non-expert, lay man and media illiterate cannot identify the elements and are hence left with no choice but to believe on photographic trickery.

## Discussion

### The Conflict: Hyper-Reality or Fake News

The inability of the conscious mind to discriminate reality from fantasy, engaging with the latter without understanding what it is doing, is a gradual submission to the world of the hyper reality. It is the 'enhancement' of reality. Theorists Jean Baudrillard, Albert Borgmann, Daniel Boorstin, and Umberto Eco contributed to the growth of the concept of hyperreality. Umberto Eco, the philosopher defined hyperreality as 'authentic fake'. Arguing from the views of semiotics, developed by Ferdinand de Saussure and C. S. Peirce, Jean Baudrillard put forward a belief that what we perceive as 'real' is only the semiotic. In a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign, he confines that the idea of the world comes strained through a universe of signs that remains impassable with traditional sociological notions of the symbolic. Modern media's representation of this 'reality effect' is sometimes twisted and sometimes blurred. This disjuncture between symbolic and semiotic constitutes 'symbolic exchange, a fundamental breakdown between signifier and sign, in which signs float free of their signifiers. In Simulacra, one of the key points is that a simulation masks the absence of reality that it helps to cover up for the fact that, after being replaced by hyperreality, reality ceased to exist (Warszawa, 2016).

This study shows how hyperreality overturns reality. In both the cases of Myanmar coup and Dimapur Lynching, we don't find the reality but a filtered hyper real situation based on imagination. Fake news thus is created, manipulated and propagated through media with deliberate intention or public agenda. The impact is grave sometimes tarnishing international relations as in the case of Myanmar Coup and sometimes taking the life of a person as in the case of Dimapur Lynching. Hence it is important from this perspective, as is vulnerable and sensitive enough to turn into a communal clash. Such effects now raise questions, if news had lost credentials. In an interesting study on the behavior of youth and news source, Seth C Lewis, (2006) states that,

"Young adults expect that five years from now, they will get less of their news and information from social networking sites more from older media, including print newspapers."

This finding deepens the affect of online media bulleting on the youth. Media saturation, if occurs to readers, will be destructive for the news world, as a negative growth of news

reading will take place. This, in turn, will slow down news industry leaving only a base room, where people no longer will roam for detail of a story. This, if we observe from media marketing aspect, may lead to shrinkage of the news industry and loss of jobs.

In the case III, photo doctoring, we find the power of intertextuality and absence of filtering which can lead to the dangers of actual information being overlooked lost in the web of fake and concocted news.

*Onion Layer Trapping:* Our search for fake news states that all news is not fake news. Only a few news are selected to create hyper sensibility. We believe that, audience feedback is one of the major ingredients that fuel into creation of fake news. Absence of research and proper facts by the audience also lead to additional poor comments and triggers further generation of false or fake news. These comments generate onion layer like structure on the original news and resulting in further feedbacks, which become source of new fake news, leaving the original news subsided, invisible and inaccessible. Corporate agenda, absence of research, entice for high rating point and popularity help the shadow creators to create false news. Therefore a filtering process has to be initiated to protect the news world as well as top capture audience.

*Perception and Agenda Rule:* When we say, "all news are not fake news", the immediate question arise, why? After analysis of the cases, we found that motive and perception of the duplicate creators or affiliates' leads for selection of news or elements which are identified or manipulated for framing desired agenda. A new half true or false or a fake news is now created and ready for public. Absence of research, as stated earlier, leads for an onion layer capsulation. Absence of media literacy leads to either confusion with the actuality of the news or rejection of the news after verification. Therefore, media filtering is recommended.

## **Conclusion**

From the research on the existing data on the cited cases, we observe that media depicts an indiscreet behaviour in terms of portraying credibility, reliability and practicality. In covering news, that too with sensitive issues of sovereignty, national integration and human interest stories, cross verifications is important. In the quest for exclusivity and breaking news, media is losing out on time to conduct research and evaluate, whatever comes into the news room.

In the second approach, we tried to focus, if there is any need for monitoring news flow mechanism, regardless of the medium. It has been observed that wide research on news propagation must be developed by academicians to protect the news world from the tentacles of fake news. It is important, as overflow of fake news might lead to news saturation for audience, resulting in news stagnation in the industry. We now need news oasis to save the news industry from 'news desert'. Media literacy is the only way to detect fake news and fake photographs. Development of technology cannot be a tool for propagation alone rather it should be a filter for fake news generation by the technological savvy's, to save the deterioration of the news world. Present and future news flow must verify these mechanisms or else, psychological rejection of intellectuals will act as reverse usher for the news media in general.

## References

- Allcott, H., & Gentzkow, M. (2017). Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election. doi:10.3386/w23089
- Baudrillard, J. (1981). *From For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*. St. Louis: Mo: Telos press Ltd.
- Baumgartner, J., & Morris, J. S. (2008). One "nation" under Stephen? The effects of The Colbert Report on American youth. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 52(4), 622-643. doi: 10.1080/08838150802437487
- Bhaskaran, H., Mishra, H., & Nair, P. (2017). Contextualizing Fake News in Post-truth Era: Journalism Education in India. *Asia Pacific Media Educator*, 27(1), 41-50. doi:10.1177/1326365x17702277
- Bhattacharjee, Kishalay (2015), *Why We May Never Know The Whole Truth About Army's Myanmar Ops*, Huffington Post' 10/07/2015
- Dutt, Barkha, & Sen, Sudhi Ranjan, *Myanmar Covert Operation: The Inside Story of the Surgical Strike* by the NDTV All India doi 11.09.15 posted on 11/06/2015.
- Farid, H. (2006). *Digital doctoring: how to tell the real from the fake*. *Significance*, 3(4), 162-166. doi:10.1111/j.1740-9713.2006.00197.x
- First Post, (2015), *Yes, No, Maybe: Was the Indian Army's 9 June counter-insurgency operation actually carried out in Myanmar*, 11.06.2015 <http://www.firstpost.com/world/yes-no-maybe-was-the-indian-armys-9-june-counter-insurgency-operation-actually-carried-out-in-myanmar-2435794.html> doi 20/09/2015 posted on 16/09/2015
- Frank, R. (2015). *Caveat Lector: Fake News as Folklore*. *The Journal of American Folklore*, 128 (509), 315. doi:10.5406/jamerfolk.128.509.0315
- Ghatak, Roy. Aditi & Thakuria, Guha. Paranjy. (2012) *Politics and Media Control*, The Hoot <http://www.thehoot.org/media-watch/media-business/politics-and-media-control-6046> doi 12/09/2015 posted on 29/06/2012
- Hardalov M., Koychev I., Nakov P. (2016) In Search of Credible News. In: Dichev C., Agre G. (eds.) *Artificial Intelligence: Methodology, Systems, and Applications*. AIMSA 2016. Lecture Notes in Computer Science, vol 9883. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-44748-3\\_17](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-44748-3_17) Human Communication Research (2017) © 2017 International Communication Association When News Meets the Audience: How Audience Feedback Online Affects News Production and Consumption. Eun-Ju Lee1 & Edson C. Tandoc Jr.2
- Jain, B. (2015, June 10). Inside story: Over 100 northeast militants may have been killed in Army's Myanmar operations. *The Times of India*. Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Inside-story-Over-100-northeast-militants-may-have-been-killed-in-Armys-Myanmar-operations/articleshow/47609757.cms>
- Laihangbam, I. (2015, March 8). 18 held for Dimapur lynching, violence. *The Hindu* [Chennai]. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/rape-accused-buried-in-karimganj-18-arrested-in-nagaland/article6971717.ece>
- Laskar, N. I. (2015). The Dimapur Lynching A Fire That Will Continue to Simmer. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 50(10). Retrieved from <http://www.epw.in/journal/2015/10/reports-states-web-exclusives/dimapur-lynching.html>
- Media Education Lab. (2017, March 9). Hobbs Talks about Fake News in Italy. Retrieved from <http://mediaeducationlab.com/hobbs-talks-about-fake-news-italy>
- Moore, M. (2016). *Inquiry into Fake News Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee Author: Martin*. Retrieved from <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/sspp/policy-institute/publications/CMCP-Consultation-Submission-for-CMS-Select-Committee-Fake-News-Inquiry.pdf>

- News Media Association. (n.d.). Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee 'Fake News' Inquiry: News Media Association Response. Retrieved from [http://www.newsmediauk.org/write/MediaUploads/Fake%20News/NMA\\_Submission\\_to\\_the\\_CMS\\_Select\\_Committee\\_'Fake\\_News'\\_Inquiry.pdf](http://www.newsmediauk.org/write/MediaUploads/Fake%20News/NMA_Submission_to_the_CMS_Select_Committee_'Fake_News'_Inquiry.pdf)
- Perreault, O. (2017, March 3). Finding truth when bombarded with 'fake news' | The Good 5 Cent Cigar. Retrieved from file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/2017-03-30%20Finding%20truth%20when%20bombarded%20with%20%E2%80%98fake%20news%E2%80%99%20\_%20The%20Good%205%20Cent%20Cigar%20(2).pdf
- Parameswaran, Prashanth (2015), 2015 'The Truth About India's Militant Strike in Myanmar: New Delhi's operation is much less novel or controversial than some have claimed.', The Diplomat.com <http://thediplomat.com/2015/06/the-truth-about-indias-militant-strike-in-myanmar/> June 12, doi 12.09.2015, posted on 12/06/2015
- Reilly, R., & Nye, R. (2012). Power, principles and the press. Retrieved from <http://www.theopenroad.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/Powerprinciples-and-the-press-Open-Road-and-Populus1.pdf>
- Riffkin, R. (2015, 2015/09/28). Americans' Trust in Media Remains at Historical Low. Gallup. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/poll/185927/americanstrust-media-remains-historical-low.aspx2010>
- Swami, P. (2015). How MEA helped Army set stage for strike in Myanmar. Retrieved from The Indian Express website: <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/cross-border-operations-how-mea-helped-set-stage-for-strike>
- Singer, J. B., Hermida, A., Domingo, D., Heinonen, A., Paulussen, S., Quandt, T., ...
- Vujnovic, M. (Eds.) (2011). Participatory journalism: Guarding open gates at online newspapers. New York: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Tsfati, Y. (2010). Online News Exposure and Trust in the Mainstream Media: Exploring Possible Associations. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 54(1), 22-42. doi:10.1177/0002764210376309

Dr. Bharati Bharali is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication and Journalism at Gauhati University, Assam, India. Her research interests include film study and media theory.

Anupa Lahkar Goswami is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication and Journalism at Gauhati University, Assam, India. Her research interests are print and online media and the emerging trends in communication.